

THE
VICAR OF LANSDOWNE;

OR,
COUNTRY QUARTERS;

A T A L E.

By MARIA REGINA DALTON.

V O L . II.

" - - - - - Ye smiling band
" Of youths and virgins, who thro' all the maze
" Of young desire with rival steps pursue
" The charm of beauty; if the pleasing toil
" Can yield a moment's respite, hither turn
" Your favourable ear." - - - - -

ARENSIDE.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

And sold by J. JOHNSON, No. 72, in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

M.DCC.LXIX.

CHAP.

THE
VICAR OF LAMSDOWN

COUNTY OF KENT

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THE
VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

The fair Fugitive.

THE Vicar was now placed in a state of enviable happiness. The health of his beloved son was daily acquiring its pristine strength. The mind of Rosina was penitently sensible of the impropriety and danger of her past

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conduct. Lydia began to feel the vanity of indulging the hopeless wishes of her heart. And Miss Margaret, participating in the general joy of her nephew's recovery, suppressed, at least for the present, the little waspish turbulency of spirit by which she used, now and then, to destroy the tranquility of others without promoting her own.

ONE morning, just after the ladies had retired from the breakfast-table, and the Vicar was preparing to take his daily ramble, Susan entered the room ; and, informing him that a person wanted to speak with him, introduced, almost at the same instant, a young lady dressed in a riding-habit into the parlour. The surprise of the Vicar was increased by the evident embarrassment under which the lady appeared ;
but

but the politeness and urbanity with which he received her in some degree quieted her agitation; and, after a momentary pause, she addressed herself to him in these words : “ I cannot wonder, Sir, that you
“ should feel considerable surprize in re-
“ ceiving a visit from a person who is al-
“ together unknown to you. My name,
“ Sir, is Maria Douglas. I am a native
“ of Scotland, where I had the pleasure
“ of knowing your son ; and hearing, as
“ I was travelling this way, of the me-
“ lancholy accident which has happened
“ to him, I could not resist my inclination
“ to make personal enquiries after the
“ welfare of a gentleman who is so uni-
“ versally esteemed.”

“ FRANCIS, Madam,” replied the Vicar,
“ is almost well ; and when I inform him

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“ of the honour which the kindness of
“ your enquiries confers upon him, I am
“ persuaded the flattery of so high a com-
“ pliment will much contribute to the fur-
“ ther restoration of his health.”

THE lady blushed at this gallant obser-
vation of the Vicar's ; and, casting her eyes
upon the ground, remained for some time
confused and silent. A conversation, how-
ever, upon indifferent subjects ensued ; du-
ring which a much longer time elapsed
than is usually employed in friendly visits
of this nature. The Vicar grew rather im-
patient. He thought that he perceived a
studied anxiety in the mind of the lady to
delay her departure ; and could not sur-
mise the reason of it. He did not suspect that
she entertained any sinister design against
the safety of his heart, yet he felt himself

rather uneasy on perceiving that he was occasionally the object of great attention from a pair of very brilliant eyes; and he thought it prudent to interrupt the conversation: after some preliminary observations, therefore, he mentioned that there were some ladies in the family who, he was sure, would be extremely happy to have the pleasure of seeing her, and procuring her some refreshment. Rising from his chair, he was advancing towards the door for the purpose of calling in his daughters, when Miss Douglas, bursting into a flood of tears, started from the chair, and stopped him.

“Oh, Sir,” she exclaimed, “how can I speak to you? In me you behold an unhappy wanderer who has voluntarily fled from the care, or rather from the

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“persecutions of her family, to place
“herself under the shelter of your pro-
“tecting roof. Urged to the nuptial union
“with a man whom I can neither reverence
“or obey, because my heart is unalterably
“engaged to another, I meditated on the
“most prudent means of avoiding my
“impending fate ; and I found that I had
“but one alternative, either to sacrifice
“my happiness, or to abandon my friends.”

THE violence of Miss Douglas's feelings obliged her to pause. The Vicar continued to look at her with astonishment: But she recovered herself in a few moments and proceeded.

“I AM sinking, Sir, under my confu-
“sion. You will, perhaps, accuse me
“of imprudence ; but my heart acquits
“me of the measure I have taken. It

“was

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“ was the only means by which I could
“ avoid eternal misery. Induced by the
“ knowledge of your benevolence, which
“ I heard from a tongue most eloquent in
“ its praise, and which, before I took this
“ step, I made it my study to have con-
“ firmed, I have flown to you for protec-
“ tion. You, who are a father to the fa-
“ therless, will, I hope, pity, shelter, and
“ protect me. I should be unworthy of
“ your kindness were I to disguise the
“ truth. But Oh, Sir ! how shall I find
“ courage to tell you that you have a
“ right to protect me ! It is your Francis—
“ your too amiable son — it is for his
“ sake that I have relinquished fortune,
“ abandoned my friends, and flown to you
“ for protection.”

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THIS declaration of her passion for Francis threw Miss Douglas into the most violent agonies; and the Vicar, hardly able to recover his speech from the effects of his surprize, lost all notion of the impropriety of her conduct, in his endeavours to soothe her mind. When she recovered, he expressed his amazement and disapprobation of the rash step which she had been induced to take; but he requested that she would inform him of the circumstances which had influenced her conduct, that he might be the better enabled to judge how far it was honourable or expedient for him to comply with her request; and she related to him every particular with a degree of openness and candour which won his heart.

" I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear young
 " lady, that the relation you have given
 " me has engaged my interest; but I can-
 " not approve of your conduct. An elope-
 " ment contains something so repugnant to
 " the feelings of delicacy, to those trem-
 " bling apprehensions which Providence
 " has implanted in the female breast, to
 " preserve the sex from committing enor-
 " mities derogatory to their character,
 " that I confess the idea of it has always
 " shocked me. An unpleasing union and
 " the harsh conduct of relations are the
 " usual excuses to palliate this step; and
 " certainly nothing short of extreme ne-
 " cessity should induce a lady to expose
 " both her person and reputation to the
 " dangers of such a conduct. But tell
 " me candidly, Did not the hope of sec-
 " ing the object of your affection in some

“ degree prompt you to undertake this
 “ measure? I perceive by your blushes
 “ that it did. As you have thrown your-
 “ self on my protection, you must allow
 “ me to speak to you with the freedom of
 “ a friend; and I assure you, the strictest
 “ conduct is required to retrieve the esteem
 “ which is forfeited by such a step. You
 “ have desired my protection; and my
 “ pride is flattered by the distinction
 “ you have paid me: but the rights of
 “ justice revolt at the idea; for in shelter-
 “ ing you, I usurp a privilege to which I
 “ have no pretension. As, however, your
 “ supplications are so extremely earnest,
 “ and your present situation seems of ne-
 “ cessity to require that something should
 “ be done, I shall conceal the place of your
 “ refuge until you can, by negotiation,
 “ compromise matters with the gentleman
 “ for

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“ for whom you were designed, or effect, by
“ some other means; a reconciliation with
“ your friends. You shall be welcome to
“ my house, until I can provide for you a
“ proper retreat; for I am persuaded your
“ own sense of delicacy will inform you
“ of the impropriety of my permitting
“ you under these circumstances to see my
“ son. My honour, as well as your de-
“ licacy, forbids it; and therefore, while
“ he is confined to his chamber, I shall
“ studiously conceal from his knowledge
“ that you are under my roof. I am sorry
“ to impose restraints upon you which may
“ appear harsh or unpleasant to you; but
“ I have, I hope successfully, endeavour-
“ ed to preserve my character unfulled;
“ and were I to permit an interview with
“ my son, the world might justly condemn
“ me for encouraging filial disobedience;

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“for the sake of gratifying a passion,
“which circumstances seem to render
“hopeless.”

As the Vicar spoke these words, the tears ran down the cheeks of Miss Douglas, in the bitterest anguish.—But he could not help speaking the real sentiments of his mind ; and, however she might feel their severity, he thought it his duty to rebuke her for contemning the authority of her friends, though he highly disapproved of the tyranny of their conduct.

“OH ! Sir,” she replied, “you seem
“to think me insensible to the feelings of
“delicacy. Did you but know the
“weight of those sensations which, more
“poignant than ten thousand daggers,
“now stab me to the soul, you would not
“so

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“so severely condemn me. Cast me not
“from you thus friendless and unsup-
“ported. The sentiments by which you
“with the conduct of your own daughters
“to be guided, shall be the rule to govern
“mine. You shall guide, direct, and go-
“vern me as you please. I will not at-
“tempt, I will not even wish, if it be
“possible, to see your son. He shall not,
“by my means, know of the elopement
“I have made; but do, Sir, like a fa-
“ther to the unprotected, screen and
“comfort me.”

THE benevolence of the Vicar expanded
to the affecting softness of this address.
It was the warm plea of helpless inno-
cence; and when he looked at the nature
of her situation, he thought that she re-
sembled a little harmless lamb which had
strayed

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strayed from its fold, and wanted a shepherd to guard it from the dangers of its random liberty. His heart became interested for her welfare, and his partiality induced him to consider the imprudence of her enterprize as the venial transgression of thoughtless youth. He pressed her, as if she had been his own child, with fond affection to his bosom; and, mingling a tear with her's, reiterated his promise of protection and concealment. He tenderly cheered her depressed spirits, and, smiling, told her that he would send for those who would revive them more effectually.

He then summoned the ladies into the parlour; who instantly made their appearance. They had indeed been for some time suspended on the rack of curiosity by
their

their father's *tête-à-tête*; especially as Susan had declared that the stranger was young and handsome.

THE usual salutations took place; and the narrative which Miss Douglas had given to the Vicar was now, in a shorter manner, recapitulated to them. This instance of her confidence increased the prepossession which her engaging countenance had already excited in her favour; and she was caressed, flattered, and complimented by all the family: a thousand fond appellations were bestowed upon her; sister! friend! companion! Miss Margaret assured her that she admired her spirit; and verily believed that they were related to the same ancestor, as one of the Lairds of Douglas, she said, had formerly married a very distant relation of their family.

An

An apartment was prepared for her reception with great alacrity; and a messenger dispatched to the inn in the village, where she had alighted from the carriage, to fetch her clothes. The warmth of the season and the dust of the roads had rendered her present dress unpleasant, and upon the return of the messenger with her things, she dressed herself with a nicety which seemed to indicate her hope that the Vicar would relent, or that chance would contrive an interview between her and Francis.

“SURE enough,” said Miss Margaret,
 “I recollect that in his ravings I did
 “hear him pronounce the name of Maria.
 “—And pray, dear Madam, how did you
 “contrive your escape? I dare say it gave
 “you some trouble before you hit on an
 “expedient. Was it a silk ladder, or ——”

“I SHALL

"I SHALL with pleasure relate to you every particular of my escape," said Miss Douglas, "when my spirits are a little more composed; I can assure you it was not by the intervention of supernatural means."—

THE mind of the Vicar was rendered excessively uneasy by the event which had happened. To usurp the rights of others, and to screen a young lady from her connections, were repugnant to his principles of probity. Beside, he had only heard her own story; and though it was told with the apparent artlessness of truth, circumstances might materially vary the complexion of the facts she had related. He had given his promise, however, to protect her, and a promise with him was sacred and inviolable; but he determined

to persevere in his resolution of concealing her arrival at the vicarage from the knowledge of his son.—This resolution, however, must in a short time prove abortive, if she continued in the house, as an interview would be inevitable on the release of Francis from his chamber: an event which was expected to take place in a few days. Some dangers also presented themselves to the Vicar's mind, by affording to his daughters the company and conversation of so enterprising a genius. His sister had already too much corrupted the integrity of their minds by the nonsense of her romantic notions; and he dreaded lest the example of a successful heroine should induce them, in a fit of female Quixotism, to decamp with some fighting *Pylades* or gallant *Orondates*. But he confined the secret of his fears to his

own bosom; and determined to counter-act the prevalence of example, by unre-mitted vigilance and circumspection, un-til time should afford him a more favour-able opportunity of removing the danger.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

The unexpected Interview.

THE complexion of Miss Douglas resembled the colour of the apple blossom ; so beautifully were the tints of white and red blended on her cheeks. Her person was of the middling stature ; and she possessed a certain *je ne sçais quoi*, which gave smartness, elegance, and ease to her manners. Her eyes were full of spirit and brilliancy. An arch expression in her countenance denoted the quickness of her discernment : and her conversation proved that her ideas were numerous and refined. To a happy facility of expression she joined a disposition for railery ; but a good-natured smile which played round her lips, gave a certain assurance

surance that it was affectation or haughtiness alone which could provoke the severity of her ridicule. The excellence of her natural understanding was extremely improved by education; and her high spirit and excessive sensibility contributed not a little to increase the shrewdness of her wit. As the errors into which the liveliness of her character would sometimes betray her, never amounted to faults, she was careless of concealing them; and the honest freedom of her manners, the openness of her countenance, and the candour of her conduct, bespoke her ignorant of art. The charming sweetness of her voice was a perfect type of her temper; and just sufficient of the Scotch accent predominated on her tongue to denote the place of her birth. On the whole, we may say with justice that, she was THE

PRUDENT

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PRUDENT GIRL who would start with apprehension at the most distant approach of danger to virtue; and THE ROMANTIC GIRL who would laugh at a trip to Gretna-Green; and fly with alacrity and pleasure to the world's end with the man of her heart.

THERE are, without doubt, many sober-minded, thinking, mortals who will condemn ELOPEMENT as an unpardonable crime; and it is vain to desire such cynicks to make any allowances for the feelings of a tender and warm-hearted girl, justly apprehensive of being forced to surrender her eternal happiness in this world to the mercenary tyranny of inconsiderate relations; such censors will allow no weight to the force of affection against the preponderating scale of interest. There

are

are also many nice observers of the human character who will, perhaps, accuse her of indelicacy, in chusing the Vicar's house as the asylum of her fears; but they who thus condemn must be ignorant of the irresistible charms with which a young, handsome, and adoring lover attracts the heart; a lover too for the safety of whose health her bosom, at the moment, beat with anxious palpitation. We acknowledge that we entertain considerable predilection for our young itinerant; and, to use a phrase of Welford's, should be tempted to post such censors to Coventry, for one week at least, as ill-natured beings: we, therefore, trust they will forbear to censure.

THE discovery which her arrival at the vicarage occasioned seemed to impute slyness

ness and concealment to Francis; and the girls determined to take some favourable opportunity to extort from him the secret of his love.

THE circumspect behaviour of Maria gained, by degrees, upon the approbation of the Vicar. The critical investigation which he was continually making into her character, could discover no material defect. She appeared to him perfectly artless and innocent: and as her only foibles were being a little too high-spirited and romantic, he began to entertain for her the tenderest affection. The pleasing good-humour which she was constantly exercising for his amusement delighted him extremely. She attended him like his own daughters, and frequently flew almost into his arms with acknowledgements

ments that he was her parent ! her friend ! her protector ! But in despite of these cordial and seductive blandishments, he remained inexorable to her petitions to see Francis : not that she remonstrated against the propriety of his inhibition ; but a sly hint was now and then thrown out, seconded by Miss Margaret and the girls, to which he turned a deaf ear ; and verified the old apothegm, " That none are so deaf as those who won't hear."

THE engaging behaviour of Maria seduced Rosina, Lydia, and even Miss Margaret herself, from their true allegiance to the Vicar. The ostensible objections which he threw out against the propriety of indulging the lovers with an interview, were, to their minds, harsh and futile ; and, judging of the feelings of others by what they knew their own would be upon the same occasion, they

concerted among themselves in what manner the meeting could be best contrived; Rosina observing, that her father could not possibly be angry with the success of their scheme, as he was for ever telling them to *do as they would be done by*.— But to obtain from Francis an acknowledgment of his passion for Miss Douglas was agreed by them all to be an indispensable preliminary.

ONE evening they proposed to drink tea with Francis in his room; apologizing at the same time to Miss Douglas for the necessity they should be under of leaving her alone in the parlour. Miss Douglas, with a degree of sensibility which affected the Vicar, begged that she might be no restraint to their inclination; and they accordingly ordered the tea-things to be carried up stairs, where the Vicar attended.

THE conversation was artfully turned upon the state of their brother's heart ; and the Vicar perceived the eclclaircissement to which the introduction of this topic might lead ; but as he had no objection to a little innocent raillery, he joined in the conversation.

“ TELL me, my boy,” said he, “ for what bright northern star did you now and then forsake the classics ?”

“ PRAY, brother,” cried Lydia, “ let us know who was the object of your pastorals on the banks of the Tweed ?”

“ WHETHER she was handsome,” said Rosina ; “ or, as Sedgeley says, if her hair was of that luxuriant golden colour with which the poets have so often strung the bow of Cupid ?”—

“COME, come, Francis,” exclaimed Miss Margaret, “we have heard more than you imagine; so pray be ingenuous, and tell us all your adventures in Scotland: I love to hear particulars.”

“I WILL be ingenuous then,” cried he; “and, since you have found a mistress for me, I will describe the one which I have found for myself. You desire to hear all my adventures, and here I begin.—

“AT the University I was very studious and very happy; and I contracted a great intimacy and friendship with the Laird of Falkirk’s son. In an excursion which he took last vacation, I accompanied him; and you know, Sir, I gave you some account of our route.

“It

“It was begun at a season of the year
 “when the country appeared to as much
 “advantage as it was possible for one, of
 “whose sterility so much has been said.”

“PRAY, nephew,” said Miss Margaret,
 who was thinking more of the mistress
 than of sterility, “are not the Scotch
 “women rather clumsy and awkward?”

“By no means, Madam. They are, as in
 “every other nation under the sun, some
 “pleasing, some unpleasing. Beauty is not
 “exclusively confined to any clime; nor
 “is ugliness entailed upon any particular
 “society.

“But to proceed. We examined all
 “the curiosities that lay within the com-
 “pass of our tour. The beauties of
 “ROSAINE CASTLE particularly attracted
 “our attention. The fine old ruin im-

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“ presses the mind with the most plea-
“ sing, the most awful, the most sooth-
“ ing sensations. We saw that celebrated
“ lake, which, though encompassed with
“ frozen waters itself, remains free from
“ the icy fetters of winter. This phe-
“ nomenon has puzzled many philoso-
“ phers. Nature, as if to tease the in-
“ quisitive mind, sometimes casts a veil
“ over her operations, which the curious
“ vainly endeavour to penetrate. Suffieient
“ is indeed already open to satisfy the cu-
“ riosity of man ; but curiosity is bound-
“ less, and the thirst of knowledge insa-
“ tiable.

“ SCOTLAND has now a much more fer-
“ tile aspect than when the great genius
“ of English literature * travelled through

* DOCTOR JOHNSON.

“ part

" part of it; and was tempted to remark,
 " that a tree was a kind of phenomenon.
 " And as the understandings of its in-
 " habitants become more enlightened, and
 " their manners more refined, the impor-
 " tance of agriculture, the happiness of
 " concord, the pleasures of civilization will
 " more forcibly strike them. That un-
 " happy barbarism, which created those
 " feuds that descended in an hereditary
 " line from father to son, will gradually
 " wear away; the olive-branch shall bloom
 " amongst every clan; and all will join
 " in mutual endeavours to promote and
 " render permanent the peace, improve-
 " ment, and prosperity of their native
 " country.

" My friend and I experienced, upon
 " several occasions, the noblest hospitality.

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“ We frequently spent two or three days
“ together in the same house during our
“ route. These intervals from travelling
“ afforded us opportunities of remarking
“ some of the native customs of the
“ people. The loud notes of the PIPER,
“ ycleped MUSICIAN to the family, awaked
“ us regularly every morning. Obeying the
“ lively summons, we repaired to the great
“ hall, where we generally found all the
“ gentlemen assembled, to enjoy the keen
“ air of the morning ; and laying in a store
“ of food which a modern fine gentleman
“ would pronounce sufficient for an East-
“ India voyage. Upon these occasions,
“ those strong liquors with which their
“ bowls are usually replenished, are not
“ spared ; but from these enjoyments my
“ friend and I excused ourselves, and break-
“ fasted upon the more wholesome beve-
“ rage

"rage of milk. After our repast, we
 "mounted our coursers and prepared to
 "hunt; which, if I may speak from ex-
 "perience, I consider as one of the most
 "joyful exercises of human invention.
 "It gives a flow to the animal spirits, a
 "swift circulation to the blood, a pure and
 "delightful health to the whole frame.
 "A long chace gave us sharp appetites
 "for the substantial fare of a well-covered
 "table; and the evening generally con-
 "cluded with a dance. We slept on
 "heath fresh pulled from the mountains;;
 "rolled ourselves up in plaids; and no-
 "thing could be pleasanter."

"PRAY, nephew," said Miss Margaret,
 "did you see the ruins of MACBETH
 "CASTLE?"

C 5

"I did,

“ I DID, Madam, and walked the very
 “ battlement on which they assert that
 “ Lady Macbeth, even now, appears
 “ every night.”

“ DID you visit,” asked she, “ the plain
 “ on which THE WITCHES performed their
 “ spells ?”

“ WE did; and if I were inclined
 “ to be superstitious, I might con-
 “ clude they were condescending to pay
 “ us a visit; for a dreadful storm of
 “ *thunder lightning and of rain* overtook
 “ us on our way, the encreasing violence
 “ of which we should not have disre-
 “ garded, had we not been highly amused
 “ with the terrors it excited in a young
 “ fellow who had travelled with us
 “ some miles: But his apprehensions are
 “ scarcely to be wondered at, as he was
 “ brought

"brought up in the wildest part of THE
"HEBRIDES with an old romantic aunt."

MISS MARGARET, construing this conclusion into an oblique hint against herself, looked rather disconcerted. The Vicar and the girls smiled in secret, and enjoyed her confusion.

FRANCIS, recollecting the impropriety of his expression, immediately added, that
"she was remarkably ignorant and stupid."

"AYE, so I thought," said Miss Margaret: "Proceed, Francis."

THIS ignorant stupid old aunt," continued Francis very innocently, "had worked so much on the natural credulity of
"her nephew's fancy, that he firmly be-

“ lieved the existence of such beings as
“ witches. SHAKESPEARE’s dreadful *burly*
“ *burly* was uppermost in his thoughts;
“ and he every moment expected to
“ see broom-sticks cleaving the air, and
“ those *big-capped dames* conjuring spells
“ for his destruction, similar to those which
“ are said to have announced the fall of
“ Duncan, and the treacherous prosperity
“ of Macbeth.—In truth, the scene was
“ sufficiently wild and gloomy to inspire a
“ mind untinctured by superstition with
“ congenial horrors. The hoarse whistling
“ of the wind, the tempestuous violence
“ of the rain, and the darkness of the
“ evening, combined their powers to ap-
“ pall the mind. The encreasing tem-
“ pest, however, became too severe for
“ the indulgence of our mirth; and to
“ save ourselves from its violence we
“ hastened

“hastened towards a glimmering light,
“which conducted us to a hovel. Here
“we found an elderly woman baking
“some oaten bread over a small fire. She
“received us very courteously; sent a
“little girl into a shed for more heath-
“fuel; assisted us in drying our clothes;
“and, at last, set the oaten bread, with
“some spirits and warm milk, before us.
“Perhaps, never till this moment was I
“so perfectly convinced of the ease with
“which nature may be satisfied; or how
“much sweeter than the most sumptu-
“ous luxuries a little fatigue will render
“the homeliest fare. I must deny what
“has been said by some, that our desires
“and passions are naturally immoderate.
“We come pure from the hands of our
“Creator; and it is education, example,
“folly, and fashion, which render our
“wishes

“wishes inordinate, and our gratification
 “of them intemperate. We finished the
 “food which the good woman had set be-
 “fore us with the keenest relish; and
 “slept for some hours on a little pallet.
 “By the first gray strokes of dawn, how-
 “ever, we left her, not ungrateful to us
 “for the manner in which we expressed
 “the sense we entertained of her hospita-
 “lity.”

“PRAY, brother,” said Lydia, “did
 “you see the GRAMPIAN HILLS?”—

“YES, Lydia, and thought of your fa-
 “vourite Norval in Douglas. The play
 “luckily was in my pocket; and I perused
 “it in a cottage opposite to them. The shep-
 “herd’s slothful life; his youthful enthu-
 “siasm for arms; his love of virtue; the
 “vi-

“vicissitudes of his life; and its fatal
“end; so beautifully represented by the
“poet; all occurred to me, strengthened
“by the powers of imagination; and I
“frequently raised my eyes to those hills
“where he said, “that *among the shepherds*
“*bumble cots the blossoms of his youth had*
“*blown.*”

“My friend introduced me to his rela-
“tion, the Laird of —, who has a house,
“or rather a castle, pleasantly situated on a
“small island. This might, indeed, be fitted
“the seat of festive hospitality. His own
“family were numerous, good-natured,
“and sprightly; and there were several
“guests then with them from Edinburgh;
“amongst them a young lady of whom
“my friend cautioned me, saying; “Gude
“troth, my dear laddie, you must steel
“your

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“ your heart well against her ; for Maria
“ Douglas is quite the belle at Edin-
“ burgh. Had you seen her, Madam,
“ you would not have asked me if the
“ Scotch women were in general auk-
“ ward and clumsy. Grace, ease, ele-
“ gance, all the symmetry of beauty
“ are united in her person ; lively, in-
“ nocent, modest ; in short—”

“ In short, Francis,” said Rosina
“ the very girl you could be tempted to
“ like.”

“ TEMPTED ! Ah Rosina !”—

“ DURING our stay at the Laird’s house,
“ we were as gay as felicity and festivity
“ could make us. The approaching ri-
“ gour of the season, and the barrenness of
“ the

“ the country affording us no amusement
“ without doors, we were continually con-
“ triving new amusements to divert the
“ time within ; and Miss Douglas was the
“ life and spirit of our party. With
“ great good-nature she undertook to
“ teach me the Scotch reel ; a kind of
“ national dance ; and with such an in-
“ structor I could not avoid proficiency.
“ The bagpipes invited us every evening
“ to a dance in the great hall ; and we
“ had frequently little concerts, where
“ *melting notes, indeed, were warbled from*
“ *love-breathing lips.* At length, the whole
“ party set off for Edinburgh. I did not
“ require many entreaties to accompany
“ them. To confess a truth, I should have
“ been cruelly disappointed if they had
“ not invited me.”

“ So

“ So then, Francis,” said the Vicar,
“ you did not return to the University for
“ a considerable time after the vacation
“ had ended ?”

“ LA, brother,” cried Miss Margaret,
“ how can you ask such a question ? Do
“ you suppose a man in love ever thought
“ of his studies ? Proceed, Francis ; I am
“ quite impatient for the sequel.”

“ OUR journey to Edinburgh was the
“ perfection of delight ; and the weather,
“ though frosty, being remarkably fine,
“ gave us an opportunity, as we passed
“ along, to examine every thing that was
“ curious and worth seeing. Edinburgh,
“ on our arrival, was in its meridian of
“ gaiety. The theatre was open ; and
“ assemblies, both public and private,
“ afforded

“afforded constant amusements. This
“city has been so often described, that
“a description from me would be super-
“fluous. The design of the houses, from
“the height to which they are raised,
“and the confusion of tongues which are
“heard under the same roof, seems to
“have been taken from a recollection of
“the Tower of Babel. The opportunity,
“however, which this stile of architecture
“afforded us, of being united, as it were,
“into one family, contributed, I fancy, to
“encrease the pleasures of us all. There are
“many societies in this metropolis stiled
“*Oyster Clubs*; and into one of them we
“soon got admission. The entertainment
“of it was pleasant enough. At an early
“hour we played cards or danced, just as
“inclination led us; and finished the
“evening with a simple supper, where
“mirth,

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“ mirth, harmony, and convivial tempe-
“ rance presided. We visited the New
“ Town, which promises a perfect con-
“ trast to the old one; being clean, light,
“ and elegant. We ascended the Calton-
“ Hill; but the evening was rather tem-
“ pestuous; and a number of laughable
“ incidents ensued. The ladies were
“ blown about; hats and caps puffed
“ away; and an old beau, just as he had
“ gained the summit, losing his perriwig,
“ stood shivering, with his pate unco-
“ vered, like a bald-crow on the top of
“ Mount Teneriffe. As the frost en-
“ creased, our entertainments redoubled.
“ It is a long-established custom, when the
“ neighbouring lakes of the city are frozen,
“ to have light elegant phaetons made, in
“ which the gentlemen display their gal-
“ lantry by drawing the ladies upon the
“ ice.

“ice. Miss Douglas, with two or three
“of her companions, mounted one of
“these vehicles, to which, with five
“other gentlemen, I had the honour to
“be harnessed.”

“How delightful!” cried the girls.

“How absurd,” said the Vicar, “ex-
“cept indeed that it may serve to remind
“men of their affinity to asses.”

“How like a triumphant entry!” ex-
claimed Miss Margaret. “I really did
“not imagine the Scotch possessed so
“much taste; they must certainly have
“borrowed it from the Romans. It was
“—yes, I think it was Nero who was
“drawn about by beautiful women.”

“We

“ WE did not, however, continue to
“ exercise our honourable employment
“ for any length of time. A rumour
“ circulated that the ice was cracked;
“ and the gentlemen quickly disengaging
“ themselves from their trappings, slid precipitately to the shore. Those who knew
“ the falsity of the report laughed; those
“ who thought it true trembled; but none
“ ventured to our assistance. It might
“ literally be said, that they resolved not
“ to trust themselves on slippery ground.
“ I ascribe not to myself any particular
“ merit for not deserting my post; they
“ would all, perhaps, have staid, had they
“ been equally interested. The ladies
“ screamed; Miss Douglas fainted with
“ terror. I caught her in my arms; and,
“ forgetting my situation, attempted to
“ bear her from the carriage: but my feet
“ slipped,

“ slipped, and I received so violent a fall,
“ that it deprived me of my senses, and
“ effectually set love and gallantry at
“ nought. On my recovery I found my-
“ self in a house. My first enquiry was
“ after my fair companions, whom I heard
“ were in perfect safety; and the gentle
“ accent of Miss Douglas’s voice at that
“ moment reaching my ears, I raised my
“ eyes, and saw a tear of tenderness and
“ pity stealing down her cheek. It was a
“ balm of comfort to me, powerful
“ enough to heal contusions much more
“ severe than those I had received. The
“ gentlemen rallied me on my Quixotism;
“ Gude troth, cried one, you was a
“ foolish laddie, or you would not have
“ staid. I promise you I should na’ have
“ remained, if even assured of visiting
“ Amphititre’s bower, and having an elegy
“ and

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“and knell from Mermaids and Tri-
“tons.

“THERE was a ball that evening, to
“which all the party, Miss Douglas and
“myself excepted, went. I was unable
“to go; and she declared that she could
“not think of neglecting a person whose
“anxiety for her safety had prevented his
“attendance. You may believe me when
“I say, that I envied none of them their
“pleasure. From this evening, I ima-
“gine, Miss Douglas may date the com-
“mencement of a passion which she, un-
“fortunately for herself, conceived for
“me. Whether it was pity or gratitude,
“single or combined, which operated in
“my favour, I cannot determine; but
“from this period she distinguished me
“by very particular attentions. There
“was a softness in her voice when she ad-
“dressed

“addressed me; a marked attention in her
 “manner when she listened to me, not a
 “little soothing to my love and flattering
 “to my pride. Our adventure upon the ice
 “excited the pruriency of wit. The Muses
 “were pestered with invocations; and lam-
 “poons were circulated into every quarter
 “of the town. Some of them were stiled
 “*The Downfall of Gallantry* ;” some, “*The*
 “*new Don Quixote* ;” some, “*The unhappy*
 “*Rumour* ; and some “*The distressed Dulci-*
 “*neas*.” Nay, I did not escape : A poem,
 “containing several Cantos, appeared,
 “called, “*The sick Knight Errant*,” or, *The*
 “*second Fall of Apollo* ;” and many other
 “fine performances; which the heat of en-
 “vy produced from the brain of dullness.

“ONE of those moments which perhaps
 “the wisest of people sometimes experi-
 “ence, when Caution deserts her charge,

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“ and the whole soul is left to the instinc-
“ tive dictate of Nature and its feelings,
“ produced a disclosure of the mutual ten-
“ derness which had for some time been
“ engendering in our bosoms ; and as you
“ desired, and I promised, a candid re-
“ cital, I acknowledge we made pro-
“ fessions of love to each other, which
“ were mutually ardent ; and I fear mu-
“ tually hopeless. She told me that she
“ was under a contract to marry a gentle-
“ man, or forfeit the whole of her fortune.
“ Her romantic generosity inclined her to
“ give up all for me ; but I was not base
“ enough to take advantage of her fond-
“ ness. I scorned the idea. I could not
“ think of plunging an object I loved
“ into complicated distresses, for the mean
“ consideration of my own happiness. I
“ endeavoured to conquer my passion for
“ my

“my generous admirer; and, suppress-
 “ing the selfish dictates of tenderness;
 “resolved on forcing myself away.

“SHE opposed, while she silently ap-
 “plauded the propriety of my resolution,
 “and wept while she contemplated that it
 “was the highest proof I could give her of
 “my love, my honour, and my genero-
 “sity. I tore myself from the woman I
 “love more than language can express;
 “and quitted Edinburgh with a heart
 “overwhelmed by the torment of despair.
 “I am not so romantic as to say that I am
 “a wretched being; but I may truly say
 “that I am unhappy. I cannot positively
 “assert that my passion is indelible; but
 “I may venture to affirm, that I believe
 “it will never be eradicated. The im-
 “petuous kind of love which superficial

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“ charms, or violent admiration, excites,
“ may, perhaps, be extinguished. But
“ that love which rises on the foundation
“ of rational esteem, is encreased rather
“ than diminished by time.”

THE moment he had concluded this candid acknowledgement a voice was heard to cry, “ Good troth, I can hold
“ out no longer. You must excuse me,
“ Mr. Ouseley, I cannot possibly remain
“ any longer invisible to my Francis.”
And Maria Douglas rushed forward into his arms!—Francis, astonished at the unexpected interview, had only power, for some minutes, to press her to his throbbing breast.

“ Is it possible?” he cried when he recovered his voice: “ Can I believe my
“ senses?”

“ I HOPE

"I hope so," said Miss Douglas, shyly raising her eyes. "Oh, Francis! in what light will you see the step that I have taken?"

An explanation ensued between the two lovers, which relieved Francis from the surprise he felt. But the Vicar was not so easily satisfied with the impatient violation of Maria's promise.

"Miss Douglas," he exclaimed with anger, "you have used me treacherously. You have broken a promise, the performance of which, you well know, was the condition upon which I engaged to conceal and protect you. I am now free from all obligations, and shall certainly inform your relations of your retreat."

“It is impossible, Sir,” said Francis, with some warmth, “that she can behave treacherously; nor can you be so barbarous as to discover her retreat.”

“INDEED, Mr. Ouseley,” said Maria, while the tears trickled down her cheeks, “I acknowledge that I have done wrong; but I trust that you will make allowances for the fault I have committed. Do not, I beseech you, disclose my retreat. Be kind, be humane, and extend your protection a little farther. I have written to the gentleman to whom I was betrothed, upon a hope that he will compromise the terms of our contract: I expect an answer very soon; and I then give you my word of honour, that I shall be contented to be guided wholly and solely as you please.”

FRANCIS

FRANCIS with one arm pressed her to his bosom; with the other hand wiped away her tears. To speak the truth, her tears soon stopped; and we imagine she never was better disposed for laughing in her life, if she had not been afraid of increasing the Vicar's disapprobation.

THE Vicar's heart was not inexorable; and upon dispassionate reflection, he could scarcely condemn Maria for loving so passionately an object, which he himself regarded with unbounded affection.

MARIA pleaded her cause with the artless eloquence of nature. The Vicar saw the languid eyes of Francis reanimate with their former lustre. The flush of joy tinged his pale cheek, and fully witnessed how much the restoration of his health

depended on the continuance of his present happiness.

WHEN Mr. Ouseley, therefore, contemplated the little group which surrounded him, and reflected that it was in his power to render them completely happy, or completely miserable, his feelings subdued his anger; a benignant smile overspread his countenance, and a tear fell from his eye.

“OH! my children,” cried the good old man, “my soul rejoices in contributing to your happiness. The ardent wish, the unremitting prayer of my life is to render your felicity permanent and secure; for from your enjoyments I derive my own. But be assured, my lovely children, that without a strict
“ad-

“adherence to purity and rectitude, happiness must be evanescent and imperfect.”

THE Vicar revolving every circumstance, very naturally concluded that this scheme had been concerted. He examined Maria's dress, and observed it was uncommonly nice. A new cap which she had on, and which he recollected she and Rosina had been very busy making in the morning, confirmed his suspicion. From this trifling circumstance some may, perhaps, blame him for not foreseeing the plot which it discovered to be in agitation; but the Vicar was a very innocent man.

HE determined, however, to chide his daughters very severely for promoting an

interview which they knew he wished to discourage; but before he had an opportunity to fulfil his intention, his resentment abated; and, feeling an admonition quite awkward, he dropped the idea entirely.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

The Story of Maria Douglas.

THE Vicar's family were all assembled round a very chearful fire-side one evening, with good-humour in their countenances and harmony in their hearts, when Maria, sitting by her Francis, and being in a very talkative temper, consented to give them a sketch of her history.

"WITH very white teeth, very brilliant eyes, an elegant person, great pride, excessive generosity, a good heart, illustrious pedigree, and no fortune, Captain Douglas was universally admired.

D 6 "BING

" BEING at a Ball, at a place where he
 " was quartered, he fortunately, or un-
 " fortunately, danced himself into the
 " good graces of a young lady, the daugh-
 " ter of a man who had amassed consider-
 " able opulence by trade. The voice of
 " prudence was too weak to counteract
 " that of mutual inclination; and Hymen
 " soon consecrated a passion which *" the*
 " *purple wings of Love*" had already fanned
 " into more than a lambent flame. My
 " mother reminds me of Hawkesworth's
 " beautiful description of Minerva. The
 " lily and the rose were blended in her
 " complexion; and the ineffable mildness
 " of dignity overspread her countenance*.

* Des traits noble et fiers mêlés de douceur et de
 grace, se montrent aux yeux de Télémaque ébloui.
 Il reconnoit un visage de femme avec un teint plus
 uni qu'une fleur tendre et nouvellement éclosé au
 " soleil :

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“Her mind, open, liberal, humane, and
“cultivated, was a perfect contrast to her
“father’s. To a soul like her’s the tin-
“elled glass of wealth, all the pomps,
“the luxuries, the embellishments of
“ostentatious grandeur, were nothing in
“comparison to an union with the object
“of her affections. But her parents re-
“mained inexorable.

“By increasing the number of her at-
“tractions, he entertained the mesquinary
“hope of making a more advantageous
“bargain with the man who might be
“enamoured of her charms. With this
“view, he had improved the liberal gifts
“she had received from nature by every

soleil : on y voit la blancheur des lys, mêlée des
roses naissantes. Sur ce visage fleurit une éternelle
jeunesse avec une majesté simple et négligée. Liv. 24.

“em-

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“embellishment which an expensive edu-
“cation could bestow; and to prevent
“the propensities of youth from frustrat-
“ing the objects of his design, had al-
“ready consummated a treaty of mar-
“riage for her with a rich, powerful, and
“depraved old peer. Her union with my
“father, therefore, excited the insatiable
“resentment of disappointed avarice and
“ambition; expelled from the breast of
“her father the few feelings which na-
“ture had planted in his heart; and
“taught him to behold a step to which
“the refinements of love had led, with the
“unforgiving eye of eternal rancour. No
“prayers, no entreaties, no submission
“could soften his obduracy; and, alter-
“ing his will, he left every thing that
“he was worth to an only son.

“My

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"My parents, in spite of fortune, enjoyed the most perfect felicity; they were all to each other; and a congenial love lessened the distresses which a limited income too often produces.

"The gentle spirit of my mother, conscious of the almost indispensable obligation of filial duty, frequently lamented the implacable disposition of her father; and the idea of having escaped from the arms of misery to the bosom of happiness, alone supported her in renouncing it. My little troublesome self increased their felicity; and I was so great a PET, that several wise people prognosticated I should turn out an unruly, bold, flirting girl, and tease the good soul to whose lot I *should* eventually fall."

FRANCIS

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FRANCIS, upon this observation, pressed the hand of Maria to his lips, and whispered, we presume, some compliment in her ear; as she smiled, and looked extremely pleased.

“ I HAD attained my fourth year,” continued Miss Douglas, “ when my father, “ who had been sent in pursuit of some “ deserters, returned from the unsuccessful chace, heated, flurried, and fatigued. The fears of his wife appeared “ but too well founded. He was seized “ with a fever of so malignant a nature, “ that, in a few days, it left him a breathless corpse upon her wretched bosom.

“ In the prime of his days he expired. “ O death! thou cruel despoiler of happiness, how often dost thou steal into “ the

"the sweet domestic circle, and snatch
 "from a little harmless set of beings their
 "dear protector."

"My dear child," said the Vicar, "as
 she paused for some minutes, "let us not
 "murmur at what Heaven ordains. Death,
 "it is true, often clouds the fairest prof-
 "pects, and breaks asunder the sweetest
 "bonds; but, concealed as the designs
 "of Providence are from us, how do we
 "know but some worldly vicissitudes
 "might, in a short time, equally embit-
 "ter our state. He that deprives us of
 "friends can support us in the hour of
 "desolation; and he that takes a guardian
 "from the orphan can preserve her under
 "the shadow of his wings."

"My

" My mother," continued Miss Dou-
 glas, " was bowed down by affliction.
 " Her grief was not tempestuous; it was
 " silent and intense. In the grave of her
 " Douglas was interred her peace. The
 " alteration, as I have been informed,
 " which grief made in her appearance
 " during the short period of a week, is
 " almost incredible: from being a hand-
 " some florid young creature, she became
 " a weak, pale, emaciated shadow.

" My uncle was one of those insignificant
 " characters who glide quietly through
 " life without creating esteem; and as he
 " was devoid of all sensibility, he did not
 " regret the loss of those pleasures which
 " sensibility alone can feel. He had re-
 " ceived what is stiled a liberal educa-
 " tion; but what in reality gave him only
 " su-

“superficial ideas of good-breeding; a
 “contempt for trade; and a love for those
 “vulgar pleasures in the enjoyment of
 “which the senses alone participate.
 “His lady was one of those high-spirited
 “dames from whom Shakespeare proba-
 “bly drew his character of CATHERINE*;
 “and, being descended from a great
 “though indigent family, she imagined
 “that she condescended so much by ally-
 “ing herself with the son of a Cit, that
 “she might treat him as she pleased.
 “He was not, however, quite so submissive
 “as SIR JOHN ENVILLE in the *Spectator*;
 “and their days might truly be said to
 “pass away in the midst of crossness, con-
 “tradiction, and disquietude. At length
 “came the resistless mandate which called
 “her to the peaceful grave. Her hus-

* Taming of a Shrew,

“band

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“ hand bore his loss with dissembling de-
“ cency. He conformed to the esta-
“ blished rules of sorrow, and dressed his
“ face in clouds, his form in weeds ; but
“ his heart beat with silent rapture at his
“ emancipation. The tempestuous voyage
“ of matrimony, during which he had so
“ long sought in vain for the haven of
“ quietude and rest, was now performed ;
“ and all the toils and dangers he had ex-
“ perience and escaped, made him re-
“ solve never more to seek for happiness
“ on its troubled ocean. He determined
“ to try the calm and gentle stream of
“ retired life ; and in making his arrange-
“ ments for this purpose, my mother and
“ myself, being the nearest relations that
“ he had, were sent for to bear him com-
“ pany.

“ I HAD

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" I HAD nearly attained the tenth year
" of my age, when my beloved mother
" sunk under the oppressive weight of
" sorrow which had destroyed her con-
" stitution, and corroded her heart, from
" the period of her husband's death.
" Thus did I lose both my parents just as
" my mind was beginning to expand to a
" sense of their affection: just as I was ac-
" quiring a capacity to return their ten-
" derness with gratitude and attention.

" DEAR and valued objects, how often
" has my heart lamented your untimely
" fate, and paid the tribute of pity and
" respect to your memories and misfor-
" tunes! How often have I felt the loss
" of your soothing tenderneesses, and vain-
" ly sought for those who should supply
" them!"—

" NOT

3
THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

“Not vainly, I hope,” said Francis,—
She smiled expressively in his face, and
proceeded.

“My uncle was born in Scotland, and
“he had conceived all those prejudices in
“favour of his native country, which,
“from the few observations I have had
“the opportunity of making, generally
“attach themselves to narrow and illibe-
“ral minds; and the vicinity of Edin-
“burgh was chosen as the place of our
“residence. He provided me with a
“very careful governess to superintend my
“education; and really behaved to me,
“in all respects, with as much affection
“as could be reasonably expected from a
“man of his disposition. I have only to
“lament that, in chusing a husband for
“me, he did not think it necessary to con-
“sult

“sult the freedom and inclinations of my
“heart.

“THE gentleman for whom he de-
“signed me derives his descent from a
“very ancient, rich, and noble family;
“but a high-born passion for expence,
“which had been regularly transmitted
“from one ancestor to another, had been
“indulged to so extravagant a degree by
“the father of young ARTHUR (for so at
“present I shall call my intended hus-
“band) that a fortune once equal to all
“the splendid luxuries of life, was now
“become barely sufficient to procure its
“comforts. To subdue the hereditary
“habits of extravagance, in the midst of
“surrounding temptations, required more
“courage than Arthur's father possessed;
“and he soon beheld himself, with an
“amiable

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“ amiable wife and two lovely children,
“ plunged, by his fatal misconduct, into
“ all the horrors of penury and want.
“ Sighing for the irretrievable past, and
“ tormented by that remorse which at
“ some period or other rises the awful
“ chastiser of the children of error, he at
“ length fell a prey to his feelings, and
“ left his family to struggle through the
“ poverty which his imprudent spirit had
“ occasioned. Heaven, however, regard-
“ ed these innocent orphans with an eye
“ of pity; and, in the person of a distant
“ relation of the same name with the de-
“ ceased, unexpectedly afforded them a
“ patron and protector. The caprices of
“ fortune had bestowed upon this relation
“ the luxury of riches; but nature had
“ denied to him the talent of enjoying
“ them with advantage; and he maintained
“ through

“ through life the insipid mediocrity of
 “ character in which neither virtue nor vice
 “ predominates. At the period of which
 “ I am now speaking, he had just attained
 “ the age when the epithet of Old Bat-
 “ chelor is sarcastically bestowed ; but,
 “ instead of wishing to retrieve himself
 “ from the obloquy of that character,
 “ he congratulated himself on the good
 “ fortune which had saved him from the
 “ cares, crosses, and vexations, which, he
 “ concluded, were unavoidably entailed
 “ upon the matrimonial state ; and, though
 “ he often wished to transmit his name
 “ with honour to posterity, he could not
 “ think of sacrificing the quiet of his life
 “ to the gratification of his wish. The
 “ charms of beauty, as Sir Pertinax Mac
 “ Sycophant says, might have smote
 “ against his heart, but no admission
 “ would he give them : he thought, like

“ the poet, that they might soon grow
“ familiar to the lover; fade in his eye;
“ and pall upon his sense; and the phan-
“ tom vanished from his thought when he
“ placed it in competition with his ima-
“ ginary happiness. Under these senti-
“ ments, the family of his deceased rela-
“ tion presented to his mind an opportu-
“ nity of enjoying the consolations of do-
“ mestic society, without the risque of
“ nuptial vexation; and he adopted the
“ resolution of taking them under his
“ roof; and of educating young Arthur
“ in such a manner as to render him wor-
“ thy of the fortune he intended to leave
“ him.

“ THE genius of Arthur seized with
“ avidity every opportunity which a very
“ liberal education afforded him to im-
“ prove

“prove the gifts which nature had munifi-
 “cently bestowed upon his mind; and I
 “cannot dissemble that he is a young man
 “highly accomplished, and every way cal-
 “culated to charm the eye with admiration,
 “and the heart with love. The most ro-
 “mantic virtue need not seek for a purer
 “mind; nor imagination desire to behold
 “a form more elegantly finished.”—

FRANCIS looked a little disconcerted at
 this warm panegyric on the character of a
 rival, and attempted to draw away his
 hand from Maria's; but she gently de-
 tained it, adding with a very significant
 smile, “But there is no accounting for
 “the source of affection. He does not,
 “with all his merits, please my taste;
 “and, perhaps, I may be thought fin-
 E 2 “gular,”

“gular,” added she, looking sily at Francis, “in the choice I have made.

“THE protector of ARTHUR and the
“uncle of MARTA had been very inti-
“mately acquainted with each other from
“their earliest infancy, and the correspon-
“dent similarity of their characters and
“fortunes contributed to establish the
“closest connection and intercourse be-
“tween them. The two families frequent-
“ly spent, at different periods, many
“months with each other, and appeared
“like different branches of the same
“stock. During one of these visits, a very
“large estate on the borders of Scotland
“was advertised to be sold. The two
“old friends conceived the idea of pur-
“chasing it between them; and this idea
“first inspired the resolution of unit-
“ing

“ing Arthur and myself in matrimony.
 “The estate was purchased ; and our re-
 “spective protectors, without consulting
 “our inclinations, entered into an agree-
 “ment, the terms of which were substan-
 “tially as follow : “*That the estate should*
 “*become the joint property of Arthur and*
 “*myself, upon condition that we inter-*
 “*married ; but that the first who opposed*
 “*the connection should entirely forfeit their*
 “*claim to any part, and the estate should*
 “*wholly and solely remain to the other party.*”

“THE terms of this agreement, calcu-
 “lated for the meridian of slavery, were
 “ill suited to produce their intended
 “effect. Cultivated minds cannot bear
 “the tyranny of restraint. The passions
 “are independent agents, and ill brook
 “the sway of arbitrary power or whimsi-

"cal caprice; and I must candidly ac-
 "knowledge, there was such a perverse-
 "ness in my disposition, that from the mo-
 "ment I knew that Arthur was *destined*
 "for me, I thought him much less ami-
 "able than he had before appeared.
 "Whenever he opposed me, in the
 "slightest instance, my jealous mind con-
 "cluded that he was already usurping
 "the despotic ill-nature of a husband;
 "and I resented, with indignation, the
 "premature controul.

"He soon after engaged in a profession
 "which frequently called him into diffe-
 "rent parts of England; and as he sel-
 "dom returned to Scotland, except to
 "visit his mother and sister, I had very
 "few opportunities of learning his senti-
 "ments upon the subject of our intended
 "union,

" union, and for that reason I cannot ima-
 " gine that he was very well pleased with
 " it. In the course of a short time his
 " protector died; an event which ren-
 " dered his mother and sister altogether
 " dependent upon him and wholly within
 " his power; and, whatever may be the
 " sentiments which he entertained respect-
 " ing me, the tenderness and attention of
 " his behaviour towards them, convinces
 " me that he possesses a noble mind, not
 " unworthy my admiration and esteem.

" My uncle paid the last sad debt of
 " nature two years ago, and left me un-
 " der the care of a guardian; a cross,
 " captious, obstinate, old miser, who
 " prognosticated my utter ruin whenever
 " I purchased a ribband; wearied me
 " continually about performing the con-

“ tract with young Arthur; and extolled
 “ my uncle’s wisdom in saving me from
 “ destruction, by leaving me under his
 “ care.

“ To encrease my tortures, he had a
 “ sister who lived in the house with him,
 “ an”— Here Miss Douglas recollected
 there was an OLD MAID in the room, and
 checked herself in time.—

“ SHE was the most peevish, splenetic
 “ creature existing; and being at perpe-
 “ tual discord with herself, could not
 “ bear to see any one happy. She was
 “ fearful of my going out lest I should
 “ be amused; or of my being in retirement
 “ lest I should be quiet: she would
 “ not suffer me to read, because study
 “ tranquilized the mind; and once when
 “ I was

THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE. 31

"I was extremely ill, and besought her to
"bring me one of my books which she
"had locked up, she gave me a hideous
"volume of cookery; and, "grinning
"horribly a ghastly smile," told me that
"Arthur would be much more obliged to
"her for making me peruse such treatises,
"than suffering me to read filthy novels."

"WHAT a depraved taste!" cried Miss
Margaret; "how astonishingly vulgar!"
"I am amazed, Madam, that you had
"patience with her."

"PATIENCE, you know, sister," said the
Vicar, "as I have descanted upon it in a
"little essay on the cardinal virtues, is
"one of the chief auxiliaries to human
"fortitude; and without a considerable
"portion of it, I dare say the situation of

“ Miss Douglas with such a splenetic old
 “ maid would have been intolerable.”

“ I WILL not, my dear Sir,” replied
 Maria, “ take too much merit to myself ;
 “ I really believe I bore my situation with
 “ very little philosophy ; but I was forced
 “ by necessity to make myself content.
 “ And although I received great support
 “ under my afflictions from the natural
 “ strength and vivacity of my spirits,
 “ yet, to avoid the appearance of being
 “ hurt by her behaviour, I frequently
 “ assumed an air of cheerfulness when my
 “ heart was sinking in sadness.

“ THE union with Arthur, of which
 “ both my guardians continually re-
 “ minded me, grew more and more un-
 “ pleasant to my mind whenever I re-

“ col-

“collected the restraint which the cause
 “of it laid upon the natural freedom of
 “the heart. While this disagreeable
 “prospect of a union with Arthur occu-
 “pied my mind, I had the happiness to
 “see your son; and from that moment I
 “have thought of it with horror; for—
 “But explanations are unnecessary.”—

“Yes, indeed,” said Francis, with a
 conscious smile.

“A few days before my arrival here, I
 “received a letter from Arthur, inform-
 “ing me that he was preparing to set off
 “for Edinburgh, to claim the perfor-
 “mance of the marriage contract. The
 “intelligence distracted me; and, know-
 “ing the persecution I should suffer from
 “those with whom I resided, in case I

"made the slightest opposition, I deter-
 "mined to take a step to which, while
 "inevitable necessity urged me, my judge-
 "ment, my delicacy, and my apprehen-
 "sions were very far from giving any
 "sanction. I made the attempt. I suc-
 "ceeded in my elopement; and I have
 "thrown myself upon your goodness for
 "protection. The extended character
 "of your benevolence prompted the
 "fond hope that I should find an asylum
 "under your roof; and I have not been
 "mistaken. The unbounded gratitude
 "which my heart feels for the parental
 "tenderness with which you have par-
 "doned my rashness, and protected me,
 "time alone must reveal: for I feel it is
 "beyond the power of language to ex-
 "press. I leave

LEAVE

THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

“ I HAVE written to the gentleman
“ whose real name I have designedly con-
“ cealed under the appellation of AR-
“ THUR. A native generosity of soul, a
“ nobleness of mind which I think he
“ possesses, will, I hope, incline him to
“ divide with me our protector’s bounty,
“ without demanding performance of the
“ odious condition with which it is
“ clogged. If he will not, the conceal-
“ ment of his name may shelter him from
“ open disgrace; but the possession of
“ worlds shall never induce me to become
“ his wife. I shall yield up my portion of
“ the estate with an indignant contempt
“ of his meanness and his avarice, and
“ willingly embrace the poverty and ruin
“ to which it will reduce me. But think
“ not, Sir, that I shall in that event pre-
“ sume any further upon your generosity
“ and

"and friendship. No; with a steady re-
 "liance on the protection of Providence,
 "I shall commit myself to the exertions
 "of industry for support. The real ne-
 "cessities of nature will easily be sup-
 "plied; and I here most solemnly de-
 "clare, in the presence of you all, that,
 "if I cannot bring a fortune to my
 "Francis, he shall never be involved in
 "the smallest difficulty or distress upon
 "my account."

THE tears trickled down the glowing
 cheeks of Maria in great abundance,
 as she uttered this solemn protestation;
 but Francis caught her, with rap-
 ture, to his arms, and exclaimed,
 "Oh! Maria, my life must be miserable
 "without you. Think not so meanly of
 "my love, as to imagine it is influenced
 "by

“ by the paltry consideration of riches.
 “ I love you for yourself alone. With
 “ you I shall be supremely blessed ; but
 “ without you no degree of affluence
 “ can procure me comfort.”

THE Vicar rose involuntarily from his
 chair, and pressing Maria to his heart,
 embraced her with great affection. “ I
 “ admire the liberality of my son’s senti-
 “ ments,” he exclaimed, “ and I applaud
 “ the generosity of your’s. The arro-
 “ gant daughters of prosperity fade into
 “ insignificance, before a young woman
 “ who bears with meekness the pressure
 “ of affliction. The partial fondness of
 “ a parent may, perhaps, have made me
 “ entertain ambitious views for my son ;
 “ views which his situation did not au-
 “ thorize : but I see my folly, and am
 “ de-

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“determined to rectify it. We must
“wait the result of the letter you have
“written to the gentleman. Let him, if he
“is so selfish, quietly keep your fortune;
“and let him, if he can—be happy.
“Oh! how much more enviable will the
“state of my Francis be, when I give to
“his arms the child of innocence, the
“orphan of virtue; a woman of purity,
“whose price is far above rubies. There
“is no crime in your refusing to fulfill
“the contract. In making it, your rela-
“tions usurped a power which they had
“no right to assume. Providence could
“never intend that reason, inclination,
“all the fine and noble faculties of the
“human soul should be counteracted by
“the dictates of avarice, the designs of
“ambition, the caprice of tyranny, or the
“sordid sentiments of imaginary conveni-
“ence.

"ence. Take her, my boy, take her;
"and may Heaven sanctify, with felicity,
"your mutual passion!"

FRANCIS caught her in transport to his arms. "Oh, my father!" he cried; but joy rendered his utterance inarticulate; a burst of correspondent emotions locked up the powers of Miss Douglas's speech; she leaned upon her Francis's breast, and shed a deluge of extatic tears.

ROSINA was deeply affected. The silent evidence of Lydia's feelings appeared in her eyes. The joy of Miss Margaret was so great, that, in rising from her chair, in the warmth of congratulation, she trod upon a little favourite kitten that was playing round her feet.—At this moment

ment Susan entered the room to inform Miss Margaret the apple-pye was baked ; and the good lady instantly ushered them into the parlour ; where they ranged themselves round a table, at which all the harmony of content and festivity presided,

ROSINA warbled a song which Sedgeley had composed on the vagrancy of a butterfly ; and Miss Margaret descanted on the absurdity of his ideas in not liking novels.

THE Vicar's heart fully justified him in the countenance he had given to the passion of Francis and Maria. To rescue a young, helpless, amiable, girl from the cruelty of impending persecution, appeared to him to be an indispensable duty.

duty. He resolved, however, to wait the event of the gentleman's resolution before he gave his ultimate assent to complete the wishes of the youthful pair.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

A Mystery.

THE answer to the letter which Miss Douglas had written for the purpose of defeating the harsh and tyrannic condition of the *betrothing contract* at length arrived ; but the studied secrecy with which she concealed its contents from all the family gave a very rational alarm to their minds, and convinced them that the proposal of relinquishment was rejected. The Vicar thought himself entitled to her confidence, and felt considerable mortification at her silence ; but his offended pride prevented him from opening his lips to her upon the subject. The other parts of the family, indeed, particularly

Miss

Miss Margaret, threw out continual snares to entrap Maria into an explanation; but she was too much upon her guard to be betrayed, and even Francis himself was only partially made acquainted with the answer she had received. She assumed a very grave and thoughtful air; said she expected a gentleman would call upon her early the ensuing morning; requested that she might have the use of the parlour to herself when he arrived; and left the family to the uncertainty of vague conjecture on the cause of her mysterious behaviour.

They had scarcely finished their breakfast the ensuing morning, when a carriage drove to the door; and Maria flew with precipitation to the parlour, to receive the visitor. Curiosity, the most powerful

powerful motive of the human mind, induced the girls and Miss Margaret to peep from the windows above stairs, in hopes of discovering who this visitor could be; but they received no other gratification than to observe a gentleman muffled up in a great coat, with his hat flapped over his face, and a handkerchief at his mouth, alight suddenly from the carriage and enter the house. This appearance of concealment increased their curiosity; but as there was no means of satisfying it, they were forced to remain for some hours tortured by suspense. At length a message came to request the Vicar's immediate presence in the parlour; and at the same instant the carriage was heard to drive away. The heart of Francis bounded at the sound.

THE

THE Vicar obeyed the summons, and descended to the parlour. He found Maria alone. Her whole form appeared uncommonly animated. A glow of evident pleasure beamed through the disorder of her features, and overspread her cheeks. Her looks shed a humid lustre through the starting tears which sparkled in her eyes. Her hands were alternately raised and clasped, and then pressed against her bosom, which throbbed with emotions that language would but faintly express.

THE Vicar had continued for some moments in the room before she observed that he was present. On discovering him, she flew with rapture to his arms and exclaimed, "Oh! Sir, all is settled. He is the most noble, the most generous of men. He has released me from all
"ob-

“obligations; and has given me an op-
 “portunity of rewarding, though in an im-
 “perfect manner, the merits of the object I
 “adore. Have you, Sir, seriously delibe-
 “rated on what you said the other night?
 “Have you repented of your promise?
 “Do you fear to trust the happiness of
 “your son to one who has been guilty of
 “so imprudent a step? or, Do you still
 “think me worthy the name of your
 “child?”

“He does! he must!” exclaimed
 Francis; who, having from an involuntary
 impulse followed the footsteps of his fa-
 ther, now rushed into the room; “my
 “Maria! my love! my darling!”

THE Vicar was unable to speak. He
 took their hands; he joined them; he
 pressed

pressed them to his bosom; and Maria and Francis were folded for some moments in each other's arms in all the speechless extasy of joy.

THE ladies made their appearance from above stairs; and nothing was heard but sounds of joy and gratulation. Miss Margaret very affectionately embraced her niece that was to be; and declared that she always thought it would be a match.

AFTER the tumults of pleasure had, in some degree, subsided, "My lovely children," exclaimed the Vicar, "the felicity of your hearts is now made perfect, and every circumstance of your approaching union promises its duration and increase; but recollect that prosperity is equally with adversity the test of
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“ virtue. While the latter, like a nipping
“ frost, blights every passion ere it rises
“ into bloffom ; the former, like the ge-
“ nial fun, draws up o’erwhelming weeds
“ amidst the fairest flowers. Let not the
“ intoxications of felicity render you for-
“ getful of the divine source from whence
“ alone it springs. Still let the heaving
“ sigh of misery and want find free ad-
“ mission to your hearts. Suffer the
“ gentle tear of pity to lead you from the
“ mansion of peace to the hut of sorrow ;
“ and while the rays of sweet benevolence
“ cast the brightest beam of virtue round
“ your actions, let not the desires of pride
“ and ostentation corrupt the chaste and
“ simple goodness of your souls. True vir-
“ tue is its own reward, and disdains the
“ meed of treacherous applause. Re-
“ trench the superfluities of life, and re-
“ plenish

“plentiful with them the scanty or ex-
“hausted board of penury, and you will
“give a value to your wealth, a splen-
“dour to your existence, which gay ex-
“travagance can never purchase. Catch
“as they rise the lamentations of distress;
“and endeavour to convert the groans of
“wretchedness into songs of gladness.
“Feed the mouth of hunger with the
“cates of plenty. Soften the sadness of
“the widowed heart. Wipe away the
“tear from the pale orphan’s cheek. This
“is luxury! rapture! extasy! It ennobles
“the mind, and exalts the fairest cha-
“racters. On works like these the
“purest ministers of Heaven look down
“with admiration and delight. These
“are the joys which render earth our
“paradise. Rapturous, indeed, is the
“close of that man’s life who has

“performed such noble actions. He
“passes through the darkness of the
“grave to mingle with the sons of light:
“The sod which covers his remains is
“watered by the grateful tears of those
“his goodness has relieved. His me-
“mory is immortal. He receives from
“recording angels his best applause, and
“rests for ever in the glorious state pre-
“pared above for benign charity and ex-
“alted virtue.”

CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

The Mystery unravelled.

THE Vicar, having poured forth the joy of his heart in moral admonition, Maria requested, in a very significant manner, that he would favour her for a few moments with a private audience; and, withdrawing her hand from Francis, led him into an adjoining room. This request gave birth to the appearance of a new mystery. Curiosity was again excited to learn the reason of an interview for which there was no apparent cause; and the family waited with great anxiety for the result of the conference. They were not long absent. On re-entering the room, Maria, as if in continued conversation

with the Vicar, said aloud, "You find, Sir, the favour he expects from me, in return for the generosity of his conduct; and I cannot think that she will refuse to assist me in discharging this debt of gratitude."

"MARGARET," cried the Vicar, rubbing his hands, and chucking her under the chin, "what did you dream of last night? Had you any *omens* foreboding more than one marriage in the family?"

ROSINA and Lydia discovered some emotions upon hearing this question; they started, coloured, and betrayed great confusion.

"MORE than one marriage in the family?" replied Miss Margaret. "What do you

"you mean?— But now I recollect, I really did dream of two coffins last night."

"YES, Madam," cried Maria, "but they certainly were for Francis and myself; and except you can prove"—

"LYDIA," said the Vicar, interrupting his daughter elect, "you don't look sprightly to-day. What is the matter with you? What are your sentiments of the approaching nuptials?"

"SIR," replied Lydia, "you cannot doubt but that they afford me a considerable degree of pleasure."—

"AYE, to be sure they must," said the Vicar; "but would you not be much

“better pleased if those nuptials were
 “your own? Come, tell me the truth.”

“PRAY, Sir,” cried Maria, “don’t
 “keep her any longer in suspense. You
 “must know, my dear Lydia, that you
 “have captivated the heart of a certain
 “gentleman; no other than my discarded
 “swain; who, instead of lamenting my
 “cruelty, or dancing like *Mad Tom* on
 “the brink of a precipice; or wailing in
 “a lonely desert, like a melancholy der-
 “vise; has had the presumption to declare
 “that he is equally rejoiced with me in de-
 “stroying the contract which I feared
 “would bar my happiness; and in return
 “for his consent to cancel it, has pe-
 “remptorily insisted on my pleading his
 “cause with you.”

“SURELY,”

"SURELY," said Lydia, "no one will
"be so ridiculous as to plead for a person
"whom I never saw."

"I AM really that ridiculous girl,"
cried Miss Douglas; "and, until he
"appears, you cannot tell whether you
"have ever seen him or not. He, you
"know, may have seen you many times,
"while you have been walking, dancing,
"and upon many other occasions."

"FROM the account that Miss Douglas
"has given me of him," interposed the
Vicar, "he is, my dear Lydia, a most
"unexceptionable character; and al-
"though I have always been averse to
"laying the smallest constraint on the in-
"clinations of my children, in forming
"matrimonial connections, I think it the

“indispensible duty of a parent to point
“out a proper object, and signify his
“wish and approbation in the choice.”

“OH, Sir,” replied Lydia, turning pale,
and laying her hand on his, “mention it
“not again, I beseech you.”

“WHAT is the reason of this violent
“agitation, Lydia?” exclaimed the Vicar.
“How can you object to a person whom
“you acknowledge you have never seen?”

“OH, Sir,” she replied, “probe not
“my heart by such questions. I desire
“not to change my state. I am very
“happy as I am; very content. Do not,
“Oh do not, I beseech you, my dear
“father, torture your child, by urging
“her to enter upon cares which she finds
“herself unequal to fulfil.”

“LYDIA,

"LYDIA," said the Vicar, "you have
 "hurt me exceedingly; you seem to dis-
 "regard the purity of truth. Do you
 "imagine that I am so ignorant of human
 "nature as to believe, that any young
 "woman is without a wish to see herself
 "happily settled? that a solitary, forlorn,
 "and single state has not many terrors
 "which affright her mind; a state which,
 "however cruelly and unjustly, is so
 "much ridiculed by the world? Let not
 "any woman pretend to say, that the
 "name of *wife* has not more charms than
 "that of *old maid*; a useless member of
 "society."

THE Vicar unfortunately forgot his
 sister was in the room. "Upon my word,
 "I am much obliged to you, Sir," said
 Miss Margaret. "Very pretty, indeed!

" Useless, forsooth ! I who have managed
 " your family, who have comforted you in
 " all your troubles, who have educated your
 " children—useless !—Well, it is no mat-
 " ter.—I suppose Mr. Sedgeley has lent
 " you his Essay on Old Maids ; but let me
 " tell you, brother, people may sometimes
 " be old maids from choice.—You can't
 " have forgot—you know very well"—

She confused herself so much by her pas-
 sion, that she could not proceed ; and
 began, in great agitation, to plait the
 folds of her ruffle.

FRANCIS endeavoured to suppress his
 rising laugh by affecting a cough ; and
 Maria fiddled with her glove till she tore
 it. It was fortunate that Miss Margaret
 did not perceive them ; for, if she had,
 she would certainly have refused her culi-
 nary

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nary assistance in preparing the wedding dinner.

THE exacerbation of Miss Ouseley's passion was altogether disregarded by the Vicar. He was such a warm lover of truth, that the most trivial deviation from it hurt his feelings; and he was seriously displeased with the seeming disingenuity of his daughter's declaration.

"WHAT," said he, resuming his discourse, "can be so laudable in a young woman as a desire to be happily settled? Though the gentleman who has made proposals for you possesses a fortune far above what you have any reason to expect, it would not have induced me to approve of his passion, if I was not convinced of the purity and rectitude
" of

“ of his character. I cannot suggest any
 “ rational objection that you can possibly
 “ entertain against this alliance, except,
 “ indeed—a pre-engagement.”

LYDIA, conscious of the truth of this
 observation, blushed with confusion; and
 averting her head, endeavoured to hide
 the acknowledgement from her father's
 observation.

“ I AM afraid that you have not been
 “ candid with me, Lydia,” continued the
 Vicar; “ you know best whether I have
 “ merited your confidence.”

“ DEAREST Sir,” said she, almost sink-
 ing with confusion, “ do not distress me
 “ by speaking of this connection.”

“ ONLY

"ONLY consent to see the gentleman,
"my dear girl," said Maria.

"It is, I think, very cruel in you,
"Miss Douglas," she replied, "so un-
"feelingly to urge an interview when you
"see my situation."

"LYDIA," exclaimed the Vicar an-
grily, "you know that I have ever been
"anxious to anticipate and gratify every
"wish of your heart. Gratitude should
"afford me a return of kindness. Un-
"less, therefore, you can assign some
"reason for your reluctance to comply
"with this request, I shall think your
"refusing to see the gentleman arises from
"a perverse and obstinate disposition."

LYDIA, overcome by the severity of
her father's animadversion, was unable to
make

make any reply. She had concealed the attachment which her heart had fondly cherished for Manning from a parent whose kindness and affection had intitled him to her fullest confidence; and the ungracious light in which the acknowledgement of her latent passion would now appear, contributed to impose the silence she maintained. She felt, however, with painful solicitude, the inextricable dilemma to which it reduced her. To admit the addresses of her new lover in exclusion of her passion for Manning, by complying with her father's request; or to incur his serious displeasure, by a pertinacious refusal, without assigning a reason for her disobedience; were equally tormenting. This perplexity excited perturbations in her mind too violent to endure. A stream of silent tears discovered the anguish

guish of her heart. Her drooping head sunk upon her beating bosom; and the rival claims of duty and affection engrossed every faculty of her distracted mind.

"OH! pray, Sir," cried Rosina to her father, "do not distress my sister by further solicitations."

"No, brother," exclaimed Miss Margaret in pity for her niece, "I conjure you not to persecute her any longer with unavailing requests. You perceive her reluctance is unconquerable. Give the gentleman a decisive answer; but soften it as much as possible, since I know how intolerable a disappointment of this nature must be to a heart of tenderness."

"NAT"

"NAY then," exclaimed Maria with great emphasis, "I shall plead his cause no longer."—As she spoke these words she opened the door of the adjoining parlour.

LYDIA gently raised her tearful eyes towards it.—She started suddenly from her trance, and shrieked.—Her feeble frame was unable to endure the conflict; and she must have fallen, in agitation, to the ground, had she not been timely saved by the supporting arms of—MANNING HIMSELF !!

HE clasped her in his arms. She fainted on his breast. But language is unable to describe the mutual feelings which seemed to agitate their souls. The countenance of Manning changed alternately in

in quick succession from livid paleness to the deepest red. Lydia, at length, recovered; and, raising her head, articulated a few incoherent expressions. Manning whispered a reply.

DURING the conversation which passed between them, "I entreat you, Sir," said Miss Douglas aloud to the Vicar, "not to urge your daughter any more to a connection so very repugnant to her inclinations. Pray don't distress her by requiring her to enter upon *cares* which she finds herself unable to fulfil. Dismiss the gentleman by a decisive answer."—

"Dismiss me!" cried Manning. "No, no; I will not relinquish the happiness I have gained. Thus I press the lovely
"charmer

“charmer to my heart; its first, its only,
 “its eternal love. Thus I claim my dear,
 “my lovely Lydia, as my *destined* wife.
 “What cares, what duties is she not ca-
 “pable of fulfilling? What station can
 “exist which her matchless virtues would
 “not dignify? With a soul suited to the
 “humblest state or highest rank of life,
 “what situation can there be which would
 “not derive its brightest lustre from her
 “charms?”

A GLANCE from the truly eloquent eyes
 of Lydia finely expressed the sweet emo-
 tions of her-soul, as she gently disengaged
 herself from Manning's arms.

“MAY Heaven bless you!” cried the
 Vicar, laying hold of both their hands,
 and joining them. “May Heaven bless
 “you,

“you, and render your felicity perfect
 “and secure!—Take her; I give her to
 “you with joy. She is only rich in virtue;
 “but if she discharges the obligations of
 “a wife with the same merit that she has
 “performed the duties of a daughter,
 “you will have no reason to complain.

MANNING was, at length, invited up
 stairs, and introduced to Francis. They
 embraced with affectionate tenderness;
 but, for very obvious reasons, they exa-
 mined each other's character with the
 most critical attention. A short time,
 however, produced reciprocal dilection in
 their bosoms, indicative of the purest
 friendship.

THE personal elegance of Manning ne-
 ver appeared more captivating than it
 did

did at present. The spirited brilliancy of his eyes was tempered by the gentle softness of his soul. The dazzling animation of his countenance derived new lustre from the disorder of his features. The charming ease of his manners corresponded with the elegance of his dress. Lydia gazed upon him with silent delight ; and forgetting that it derogated from her brother's charms, wondered how Miss Douglas could resist the force of such united excellence. The idea gave her some little pain ; it implied that his merits were not irresistible ; and she could not help expressing to Rosina, during the evening, that Maria certainly wanted sensibility, or possessed a very singular and extraordinary taste.

I AM

"I AM very much obliged to you, my
"good sister, for that observation," cried
Francis, overhearing the remark. "But
"you may, perhaps with reason, arraign
"Maria's choice."

"TAKE care, Lydia," interposed Miss
Douglas with vivacity, "that you do not
"convince me of my error too soon. Re-
"collect that Manning and myself are yet
"at liberty. We may be persuaded to
"change our minds, and still resume the
"CONTRACT."

"OH! never name that foolish contract
"any more," said Manning: "the
"existence of it has given more pain to
"my mind than you, perhaps, imagine;
"and I think you the most generous girl
"alive for agreeing to destroy it."

"COME,

"Come, come, Captain Manning," answered Maria, "let not either of us assume peculiar merit upon that occasion. Both of us acted from interested motives, not from generosity; and our own happiness was the sole consideration."

"May you ever feel that happiness in its utmost extent!" exclaimed Francis, pressing her hand to his lips.

"When I quitted Lansdowne," continued Manning, "I was distracted by the contending claims of Love and Honour. Lydia possessed the absolute sovereignty of my heart; and I thought, from sentiments of gratitude to my benefactor, that you, Maria, was entitled to my hand. The struggles of my mind were

"were great and agonizing; but Honour
 "gained the victory over Love; and as
 "I had no idea of your aversion to per-
 "form the conditions of the contract, I
 "wrote the letter which occasioned your
 "elopement; and I wrote it in the warmest
 "terms, because I was unwilling to distress,
 "by the appearance of indifference, the
 "feelings of a *good young woman*, whom
 "I thought myself obliged to marry."

"Oh! pray, my *good Sir*," replied
 Maria, "don't call me *good young wo-*
 "*man*. The style of expression conveys
 "an obloquy. It imparts an idea of that
 "flat, stupid, and insipid character, which
 "is usually described by *good sort of young*
 "*woman*. I cannot endure it. But you
 "may call me *amiable*, if you please; or
 "any thing but that."

“ WELL then,” replied Manning, “ the
 “ idea of being obliged to unite myself
 “ even with a pleasing, attractive, excel-
 “ lent, deserving, amiable, charming, in
 “ short, every thing but *good*—young
 “ woman, while my heart was so en-
 “ tirely devoted to another, gave very
 “ serious disquietude to my mind ; but I
 “ was fearful of exposing my indifference to
 “ her, to whom I imagined my hand was
 “ indissolubly engaged. It is certainly
 “ true, that the performance of the con-
 “ dition was optional ; and the one of
 “ two gratifications was open to my
 “ choice : but besides conceiving that I
 “ was bound in *HONOUR* to carry the
 “ apparent wishes of my benefactor into
 “ effect, I had the powerful considerations
 “ of *HUMANITY* to controul my choice.
 “ The profits which I derived from the
 “ estate

" estate was all I had in the world. A wi-
 " dowed mother, and an affectionate sister,
 " were wholly dependent on me for their
 " support : If I had incurred the forfei-
 " ture, they must have wanted bread.
 " These were cogent motives to influence
 " my mind ; but the inclinations of my
 " heart kept, for a long time, the con-
 " flict doubtful. Honour and humanity
 " at length prevailed, and persuaded me
 " to sacrifice my own enjoyments to pro-
 " mote the happiness of others. Time,
 " I hoped, would enable me to repress
 " the tumults of my heart ; and I reso-
 " lutely determined to perform the con-
 " tract. To forget Lydia I found was
 " impossible ; but I acknowledge that the
 " idea of rendering the declining period
 " of a widowed parent's days comfort-
 " able and happy, induced me to aban-

THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

“don all hope of attaining my present
“felicity.”

“O NOBLE, generous youth!” cried the
Vicar, overcome by the liberality of Man-
ning’s sentiments. “But virtue,” conti-
nued he, “will ever meet with its re-
“ward.”

“Now acknowledge truly, Captain
“Manning,” asked Miss Douglas, “was
“not your pride and vanity a little mor-
“tified when you heard that I had eloped
“on purpose to avoid you?”

“No really,” replied Manning. “In-
“stead of *mortification* I felt a glow of
“pleasure. Hope opened prospects to
“my mind of being released from my
“embarrassment. I admired your spirit;
“and

"and if ever you could have rivalled
 "Lydia in my esteem, it must have been
 "at that moment. But I acknowledge
 "that I was *surprized* at the event; be-
 "cause your guardian had informed me
 "you were anxious for the match."

THE conversation which this *denouement*
 occasioned was continued with alternate
 seriousness and vivacity until dinner
 was announced; where the extraordinary
 exertions of Miss Margaret's catering
 talents appeared very conspicuous in the
 hospitality of the board. The after-
 noon was passed in songs of gladness,
 and in sentiments of delight. Mirth
 and merriment sanctified a thousand
 fooleries, which, in a graver moment,
 would have appeared ridiculous. Joy

G 3, reigned.

reigned in every breast, and, excepting one or two, the day never closed upon a happier set of beings than those who were now assembled at the vicarage.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

The Consequences of Levity.

IT has, perhaps, already suggested itself to the reader's mind, that the two persons whose hearts felt a tincture of discontent at the approaching nuptials, could be no other than the fretful aunt and her disappointed niece. Miss Margaret could not digest the circumstance of Lydia being married before her elder sister; and Rosina, with deep regret, reflected that it was in all probability her folly alone which had excluded her from approaching the altar in the bands of Hymen with her brother and sister. That Melford loved her with an enthusiastic passion she was well convinced; and, on reviewing the egre-

gious levity with which she had behaved towards him, she ceased to wonder that the warm and volatile disposition of his mind should have mislaid his virtue. While her personal charms had inspired his breast with the warmest love, the mistaken idea which her misconduct had raised of her character, precluded his esteem; and she dreaded lest the conclusions of his mind should, in time, eradicate the affections of his heart. It was natural, she thought, that a man of sense and understanding should wish to escape the trammels of coquetry; and she was assured that if she had maintained a proper dignity in her conduct, he would never have presumed to encroach upon the bounds of decorum. If she had cultivated his good opinion and esteem to the same extent that she had gained his love, she

she flattered herself that he would before now have made honourable proposals to her; and, like the rest of her family, she might at this moment have beheld prospects of increasing felicity rise upon her view. But her mad career of folly had, in all probability, alarmed his mind, deprived her for ever of happiness, and incurred, perhaps, the hatred of the only man with whom she could enjoy that extatic interchange of soul,

"Where thought meets thought ere from the lips

"it part,

"And each warm with springs mutual from the

"heart."

POPE.

These mortifying reflections agonized her soul, and filled her eyes with tears of the bitterest anguish.

SUCH are the consequences, Oh ye daughters of LEVITY! which, at some period or other, will ever flow from your unthinking conduct. And happy are ye, indeed, if, like Rosina, your errors fortunately escape the impending horrors of attendant guilt. Remorse will follow disappointment; and the sighs of sorrow, the tears of penitence, cannot recal your past indiscretions. If, however, they flow from the pure and unadulterated source of true conviction; if the heart, untainted by vice, seeks unaffectedly to amend its errors, and to reform its feelings, your sighs and tears shall stop the voice of satire, and change the noise of censure into sounds of praise. Triumphant virtue shall recommend the returning child of error to her own esteem, and re-establish

bliss her character with the worthy and the wife.

AMIDST the tumults of Rosina's mind ENVY bore no share. She lamented the misfortunes which her follies had occasioned; but she rejoiced, with pure and unaffected cordiality, at her sister's happiness. Miss Margaret, however, did not so candidly distinguish; and she would willingly have placed Rosina at the altar in the stead of Lydia. The warm hopes which she had long cherished of seeing her favourite niece first married were disappointed; Melford had deserted the field; and the country in which they lived did not afford a great variety of game for the matrimonial net. Like a provident patroness, therefore, she began to turn her serious thoughts towards young

Sedgeley; and, although she had never given much encouragement to his addresses to her niece, she thought, with proper management, he might be rendered a tolerable match; and she resolved to seize the first favourable opportunity of advising Rosina not to neglect the present opportunity.

“ I ADMIT,” said Miss Margaret, as she walked down the garden with Rosina the same afternoon, “ I admit that he is
 “ not *quite so much the thing* as Captain
 “ Melford; but, in proper hands, he
 “ may be greatly improved. You shall
 “ have all the assistance that I can afford
 “ you to manage him. A few unhappy
 “ prejudices are his chief foibles; divest
 “ him of them, and he is really a hand-
 “ some, genteel, sensible, agreeable, young
 “ man.

"man. You know that he adores you ;
 "and that his father can give him a very
 "good income. You had better follow
 "my advice ; take him, and be married
 "on the same day with your brother and
 "sister. I make no doubt but that, at
 "his father's death, you will be enabled
 "to rattle in your carriage."

ROSINA, at first, violently rejected Miss
 Margaret's advice ; but her repeated ar-
 guments, and the growing happiness,
 bustle, congratulations, and merriment of
 the rest of the family, after some reflec-
 tion, seemed to make an impression on
 her mind. She did not *dislike* Sedgeley,
 she said ; and yet, she did not *love* him.
 She wished to gratify the inclinations of
 her friends ; and her prospect of regain-
 ing Melford was hopeless and forlorn.—

Her

Her aunt left her to deliberate upon this subject; and she had almost come to a resolution to conquer, if it were possible, the inclinations of her heart, when her sister Lydia running with eagerness to her said, that she had just had a long conversation with Manning concerning his friend Melford, and that he had assured her his heart was still fondly attached to Rosina. This intelligence effectually put to flight all her ideas in favour of poor Sedgeley; and rekindled every dying hope within her heart. The rapturous thought of still being dear to Melford gave new animation to her soul. She re-examined her feelings. She found them inviolably attached to him; and she was only astonished how she could for a moment think of listening to the addresses of another.

Miss

MISS MARGARET was extremely dissatisfied with Rosina's determination to give up Sedgeley, until she acquainted her with what Lydia had imparted. The old lady, with wonderful versatility, immediately changed her sentiments; and poor Sedgeley was once more, in her opinion, a very positive, prejudiced, awkward, and unpleasant young man. The joy she felt at the idea of Melford's returning to his allegiance, banished from her mind the objection of Lydia's being first married; and absolutely made her renounce her usual prudence of preserving the constancy of Sedgeley as *a corps de reserve* in a case of extremity.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

The double Marriage.

THE day appointed for the nuptial ceremonies arrived ; and Hymen attended the altar with his double torch. The service was performed in the village church ; and both the brides were given away by Mr. Collins, an old admirer of the Vicar's sister. Heaven never ratified the vows of purer or more affectionate hearts !

THE dresses of the ladies were contrived with great taste and becoming simplicity. A tear started to the eye of Lydia, which Manning kissed away. Miss Douglas looked a little pale, but her fine complexion soon resumed its native beauty.

All

All the company behaved with that decorum which the solemnity of the occasion required, except Francis, who received a rebuke from the Vicar for whispering Maria while he was marrying his sister.

ROSINA, deeply affected by the awfulness of the ceremony, to which the very excellent manner in which the Vicar performed it, not a little contributed; or, impressed by sensations which may be easily guessed, was all attention; and when it was over she folded both her sisters to her heart, and mingled with her congratulations tears of unutterable sensibility.

On their return to the vicarage, the Vicar produced three hundred pounds, and offered it to Manning, as his daughter's portion.

portion. He refused to receive it. The possession of Lydia was the treasure of his soul, and no portion could add to her value. But he begged that it might be given to Rosina, as a small mark of his and her sister's esteem. This generosity deeply affected the Vicar. Rosina continued silent. But Miss Margaret extolled the spirited liberality of his conduct with unceasing raptures.

THE delight of preparing *the marriage feast* was the peculiar right of Miss Margaret; and she had elaborately exerted all her ability to render it pleasingly elegant. She experienced, however, some mortification. A little motley Cupid, which she had erected on a transparent pedestal, no sooner made its appearance on the table than it sunk beneath a sea of jelly. A
towering

towering pyramid of *blanc-mange*, tottering from its height, sunk to its foundation in ruin and disorder. To the Vicar, indeed, these misfortunes afforded some pleasure; for he had strenuously opposed her borrowing *shapes* from a lady in the neighbourhood, upon a conception that the parade of such dishes was incompatible with the humility of his condition.

AFTER dinner was over the Vicar's cottagers were not forgotten. The old man, who seldom tasted any thing stronger than milk, now drank off a bumper of cyder to the prosperity of the new-married couples. He desired, as he leaned over his supporting crutch, to behold his beloved Lydia; and Manning led her to him. He blessed them both, and dropped a tear of gratitude and joy upon her fair hand.

He

He begged, if it was not too bold, that he might be permitted to see Master Francis and his lady. They instantly appeared. Maria turned her cheeks to his lips; and he invoked the choicest blessings of Heaven on the children of his benefactor.

MISS MARGARET, with great pleasure and alacrity, distributed the cake, ribbons, and gloves. The family of *the Norrises*, for very obvious reasons, were the first who received these bridal favours; and Miss Margaret took care to accompany them with a note of her own writing, though in the names of the brides, the exultation of which did not excite much relish for the present they received.

THE vicarage continued for some time to be the region of delight. Captain Manning,

Manning, however, felt an impatient wish to introduce his wife to his mother and sister; and as Maria had received a letter from Scotland concerning the settlement of some business which required the inspection of her husband, a proposal was made to quit the vicarage. Both parties were equally desirous of Rosina's company; and it was at length agreed that she should first go with Mr. and Mrs. Ouseley to Edinburgh; and that they should all, on their return, spend some months at Manning's house.

MISS MARGARET was also pressed, in a complimentary way, to take the excursion. - Her inclinations were for some time divided between her affection for the Vicar, and her fondness for amusement. It was now winter; and the idea of being
exalted

exalted in a high phaeton, and drawn about like a triumphant queen by the northern swains on the frozen lakes of Edinburgh, or the Tweed, was highly pleasing to her imagination. But the solitary and uncomfortable situation in which she conceived her absence would leave her brother, at length conquered her predilection for pleasure. She resolved, therefore, to remain at the vicarage; but she every now and then interrupted the comfort of the Vicar by reminding him of the sacrifice which she had made to it.

Rosina captivated all who saw her at Edinburgh: and, had the family remained there much longer, she must have become the most celebrated toast of the time. Her conduct, however, was remarkably circumspect and prudent; and she gave
very

very little encouragement to Caledonian gallantry. Her whole mind, indeed, was occupied with the transporting expectation of meeting Melford during her stay at Manning's; and she waited with the most impatient anxiety for her brother and sister's departure from Edinburgh.

FRANCIS, having at length finished his business, departed from Edinburgh, and arrived at his brother-in-law's house, where they were received with demonstrations of welcome which can only arise from the purest affection of the heart. The scene of happiness which Lydia and Manning exhibited was delightful to behold. Health and vivacity, peace and content reigned throughout the house, and completely contradicted the cynical observation, that perfect

perfect felicity cannot be experienced on this side the grave.

THE vestige of superior loveliness was still discoverable in the features of Manning's mother ; and the pleasing affability of her manners indicated the goodness of her heart, while the good sense and vivacity of her conversation rendered her company enviable and interesting.

HER daughter ELIZA was now in the eighteenth year of her age. She was not handsome ; but there was a mild and gentle appearance in her countenance, an expression of such touching sensibility in her features, that she instantly prepossessed every feeling heart in her favour. Her voice was finely modulated to the strain of pity. Her eyes beamed a ray of the
divine

divine compassion of her heart. Flexible as the bending ozier, she was susceptible to the slightest breezes of affliction, and she seemed born to inspire tenderness and love. She was the adoration of her brother; and Lydia loved her for his sake and for her own.

THE house was situated in the middle of a beautiful country; but it possessed the singular advantage of an excellent neighbourhood. Winter had stripped the surrounding woods of their verdure: their situation, however, made it obvious that, during the softer seasons of the year, they must be delightful.

THE bridal rejoicings were not yet over. Every day presented some new entertainment; and the arrival of the rest of the family

was welcomed by a new succession of visits from the innumerable friends which the complacency of Mrs. Manning had created throughout the country.

THE heart of Rosina rebounded to the felicity which her sister enjoyed; but she felt some disappointment in not seeing Melford among the number of her friends. Delicacy and pride, however, restrained her tongue from dropping the slightest hint to Manning upon the subject; and though the anxiety of her mind forced her to trust the feelings of her heart to Lydia, she could not gain any satisfactory intelligence concerning the object of her affection. The attentions, however, of the country beaux contributed to divert her mind; and her charms made considerable havoc among their hearts. One of them in particular

cular spoke seriously to Manning on the subject of his attachment for her; and poor Rosina was not a little rallied on the conquest she had made. This gentleman was a second Actæon; and Rosina, in answer to Manning's raillery, assured him that she had no ambition of rivaling a *favorite mare*; nor should she place herself in competition with a *pack of fox-hounds*; and therefore desired he would signify to the gentleman that she could not think of becoming his help-mate.

While she waited in daily expectation that Melford would arrive, she received a letter from Miss Margaret at the vicarage. She had, indeed, received several since her departure; but let this suffice as a specimen of them all.

H 2

To

TO MISS OUSELEY.

"DEAR CHILD,

"I AM quite sick at your long absence.
 "Sedgeley has pined in thought ever
 "since you left us. He has composed a
 "sort of Elegiac Ode on the flight of
 "*Daphne*; and we all know that by
 "*Daphne* he means *Rosina Ouseley*. The
 "Vicar is frequently troubled with the
 "*Hip*, and I assure you I am not much
 "better.

"SALLY NORRIS has received a very
 "elegant cap from London. She certain-
 "ly does not become a fashionable dress;
 "she sported it, however, last night at
 "Mrs. Jefferies's, where we had a great
 "deal of company. Amongst the rest was
 "her

“her nephew, who is just let loose from
 “the University. He is the most dole-
 “ful figure you ever saw, and looks as if
 “he was upon the eve of blowing out his
 “brains with a pistol; that is, if he has
 “any, my dear, I mean.

“I REQUEST that you will be more
 “particular in your next. Tell me,
 “Rosina, of all the conquests you
 “made at Edinburgh. Say what you
 “are doing at Captain Manning’s, and
 “whether Melford is there. If he is, I
 “make no doubt—But it is no matter;
 “for Sedgeley loves you, I am sure; so
 “you are always certain of one.

“I HAVE got a new novel, which af-
 “fords me a few hours recreation.—The

"white gown shall be altered against you"

"come back. Take care of yourself."

"Your father joins me in love to your
brothers and sisters. Believe me

"Your's affectionately,

"MARGARET OUSELEY."

CHAPTER

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

The arrival of Melford.

THE conviviality which reigned at Manning's residence made it the favourite resort of the young and gay ; and every hour presented an uninterrupted succession of social pleasure and domestic felicity.

ONE evening, when a large *partie* were assembled round A COMMERCE-TABLE, the servant hastily entered the room, and whispered something in his master's ear. Captain Manning immediately retired ; and, after an absence of some time, returned, accompanied by no less welcome a visitor than his friend—MELFORD !

H 4

WHAT

WHAT were the feelings of Rosina when he approached the table ! Her face glowed with the blushes of confusion. Her senses seemed bewildered. She was dealing the cards ; and, by collecting her scattered spirits, she was enabled, for a moment, to continue the deal ; but, after having dealt about one-half of them wrong, the remainder of the pack dropped from her trembling hand *. This *accident*, as it was called, encreased her confusion ; and though she held, the next deal, a pair royal of kings, she was going to throw up her hand, till Manning, who had watched her emotions, asked her what she was about ?

* Nature is, in all cases, invariably the same ; and similar causes will always produce similar effects. An event of the like kind happened to Sophia Western. Vide TOM JONES.

ELIZA

ELIZA, perceiving Rosina's distress, endeavoured to divert the attention of the company by entering into a conversation with Melford. "What have you been doing with yourself, Captain Melford," said she, "since we had the pleasure of seeing you? You look pale and thin. The dissipations of BATH do not seem to have agreed with you. I assure you we heard of your flirtations with Miss ——— what is her name? You know whom I mean. Fame speaks so highly of her charms, that one is apt to conclude they cannot all be natural."

ROSINA's heart vibrated to the sound of Eliza's voice, while she thanked her for the interposition.

"OH!" exclaimed Melford with rapture.

H 5

"She

"She is more than painting can express,

"Or youthful poets fancy when they love."

"But really whether she is indebted more
 "to Nature or to Art for the beauty she
 "possesses, except like *Will Honeycomb* I
 "had started from behind the tapestry
 "and surprized her at her toilet, I cannot
 "possibly, my dear creature, completely
 "ascertain; though I believe I should not
 "speak untrue, if I were to say that her
 "complexions came from France. The
 "follies of fashion cannot deprave my
 "taste, I assure you. I am still the same
 "warm admirer of honest nature as ever.
 "I adore the warm glow," he continued,
 leaning on a chair opposite to Rosina, and
 fixing his quick and penetrating eyes upon
 her face, "I adore the warm glow which
 "springs from the genuine feelings of the
 "heart;

“heart; it produces a vivid colouring
 “which the cold and studied hand of art
 “can never reach. The loveliness of na-
 “ture warms the imagination with deli-
 “cious extacy: it feasts the eye; en-
 “raptures the senses; and communicates,
 “by a sort of magic sympathy, the finest
 “joy to every feeling of the heart.”

“WELL, but what marriages have lately
 “taken place there?” interrupted Eliza.

“THE last,” replied Melford, “was be-
 “tween a young Creole and a *suptrannuated*
 “*Dowager*. The great contrast of their
 “characters furnished for some time a
 “subject of equal laughter and surprize.
 “The surprize, however, immediately
 “vanished when it was known that *the*
 “*West-Indian*, to use a technical expres-

" sion, had been recently stripped of his
 " gaudy plumage by *the vultures of Lon-*
 " *don*, and had prudently resolved to fea-
 " ther his nest again from the rich savings
 " of the old lady's jointures; for, like
 " the widow Snap, it was said that she
 " had been *endowed* in more counties than
 " one.

" A NEW PACE, also, came out before
 " I quitted BATH, which raised great
 " commotion. Among the rival beaux
 " who stood candidates for her favour,
 " were *the Honourable Mr. Roberts* and Sir
 " *John Bentley*. She was reputed to be
 " immensely rich, and the contention
 " therefore, as you will imagine, ran very
 " high. Their success, however, seemed to
 " be equal, till Mr. Roberts rattled by her
 " window, round the Circus, in an ele-
 " gant

"gant phaeton, which he managed with
 "the grace of a Mercury; and gave
 "a flutter to her heart that almost de-
 "cided the contest in her favour. But
 "his rival made his appearance, the
 "next day, in a blazing new equi-
 "page, with a retinue behind it as nu-
 "merous and superb as that of an Am-
 "bassador or a Nabob; himself lolling
 "with the easy grace of an Adonis in one
 "corner of it: and it is now imagined
 "that she will defer venturing her neck
 "with Mr. Roberts, and go off *vis-a-vis*
 "with Sir John."

"I DON'T credit one-half you have
 "said," cried Eliza. "These are the
 "sort of stories with which you always
 "amuse and disappoint my curiosity when
 "I enquire about news."

At

At this instant, the commerce-party being out, the card-party broke up; and Melford, quitting his conversation with Eliza, advanced towards Rosina. "It is unnecessary, from your looks, Miss Ouseley," said he, "to enquire if you have enjoyed perfect health since I had last the pleasure of seeing you."—

ROSINA'S mind, from the moment it had recovered its composure, had been silently indulging a train of sentiments highly favourable to the partialities of her heart; but Melford's injudicious question reminding her of the circumstances of their last interview, the cruel and dishonourable part he had then acted, rushed with aggravation to her memory; and put all the arguments she had been collecting in his favour to flight: and she

hastily

hastily left the room without affording him any reply.—Melford secretly acknowledged the propriety of her feelings; and, on her return to the company, he continued, during the remainder of the evening, to gaze in silence on her charms; not daring to speak to her again, lest the treacherous perturbation of his mind should again betray his tongue into some unguarded expression, repugnant to the interests of his heart.

WHEN the company departed, Rosina immediately retired to her apartment; but her mind was too much agitated to enjoy the blessings of repose. The palpitations she had felt when Melford first entered the room, assured her that her heart remained unaltered in its attachment to him; and the quick sensibility which the
bare

bare recurrence of their last interview
 had produced, made that "*assurance doubly*
"sure." She recollected, however, the
 dangerous mists in which LOVE and LE-
 VITY had heretofore involved her; and
 although she had resolutely determined to
 reform her conduct in the one, yet it ap-
 peared still necessary to avoid the delu-
 sions of the other; and as their present
 meeting was probably the important crisis
 of her fate, she resolved to act with great
 prudence and circumspection. For this
 purpose she laid her head upon the pil-
 low, and began a very serious enquiry into
 the nature of her situation. That she
 loved Melford with increasing ardour was
 indisputable; that Melford entertained a
 passion equally warm and tender for her,
 she was fondly inclined to believe; but he
 had offered a gross and unprincipled in-
 sult.

sult to her virtue. These several truths were placed in all the various combinations to which an ingenuous mind, anxious to reconcile the adverse claims of Love and Honour, could possibly resort. The dexterity of love presented to her mind a retrospect of the innumerable *levities* she had been guilty of, and she endeavoured to palliate the flagrancy of his misconduct by imputing it to the mistaken notions of her character which *they* must unavoidably have raised in his mind. But the delicacy of insulted honour opposed the forgiveness she was so well inclined to afford him; and she resolved not to listen to a reconciliation till she was convinced of his contrition by the submissiveness of his manners, and the sincerity of his apology. Under these circumstances, but under no other, she conceived that

that she might, without the least deviation from propriety, suffer her feelings to subside.

THE ensuing morning, as the ladies were quitting the breakfast-parlour, Manning detained Rosina, and taking her tenderly by the hand, presented her to Captain Melford; saying, that he was thoroughly convinced of the sorrow of his friend from the uneasiness he felt, and intreated that all coolness between them might cease. Her brother Francis also joined his entreaties to the same purpose; and assured her that all animosity between himself and Captain Melford was entirely done away, and that the sincerest reconciliation had taken place.

"I HOPE,

“I HOPE,” exclaimed Melford, “that
 “Miss Ouseley will not be less generous
 “than her brother, nor withhold a for-
 “giveness that will render me so happy.”

—Melford continued to press his petition
 with all that insinuating and attractive
 grace which had before rendered his elo-
 quence so dangerous and seductive. Con-
 scious of the power of his charms, he
 assured himself of success; and, assuming
 the lofty air of confidence, he attempted
 to seize the hand which Manning held.
 The boldness and presumption of this at-
 tempt hurt extremely the natural pride
 and delicacy of Rosina's mind; and mili-
 tated so strongly against that humble
 and obsequious style which she expected
 would attend the first expressions of his
 sorrow and repentance, that she coldly
 withdrew her hand; and, saying that she

was

was happy to hear he had effected a reconciliation with her brother, walked composed and calmly out of the room. This was the first effort of prudence, as she conceived it, to dispel the delusions of love; and she bestowed the highest encomiums on the propriety of her conduct, and the steadiness of her resolution. But the success which she attributed to this policy led her into extremes which proved fatal to her repose; for, observing that Melford was very sensibly mortified by the coldness of her behaviour, she entertained the romantic notion, of exciting his sensibility by an affected disdain; of quickening his passion by seeming to disregard it; of making him languish for her smiles by the frequency of her frowns; of reducing him, in short, to that passive, trembling, yielding state, which,

which, she conceived, could alone atone for his former guilt, and persuaded her feelings to forgive him. This resolution, however, only served to rekindle in her bosom the lambent flame of vanity which she had imagined was expired; and to rivet her more stedfastly to this preposterous line of conduct.

SUCH a conduct with some characters might have proved effective; but Melford possessed a disposition too imperious to be controuled by the caprices of female tyranny; and although he had reason to be assured of Rosina's virtue, he still thought her a light, volatile, and vain character, who would flirt with every coxcomb, and triumph in the idea of having given pain to a man of sense. The coldness with which she had repulsed

his

his first overtures toward reconciliation, and the fastidious style of her subsequent behaviour, mortified and astonished him; especially as he could not conceive she would expect him to become a very humble suppliant to expiate an offence which he was conscious he should never have attempted, if he had not been encouraged to it by her own levity. He therefore concluded that she desired to keep not only his heart, but his understanding in captivity; to sport with the tenderness she had inspired; and to betray him into those absurd and weak actions he had so frequently ridiculed in other men.

Born parties acted from their preconceived opinions of each other with equal pertinacity, and exhibited an entertainment as ludicrous to the rest of the family,

mily, as it was painful and dangerous to themselves. Rosina had modelled her features to so exact a correspondence with the principles of her policy, that Melford with all his vigilance could not catch from her eyes one favourable glance. So well did she play her part, that if his knowledge of her character had not assured him her behaviour was a mere stratagem to reduce him to a level with her wishes, he must certainly have thought that he had lost all influence over her heart. But his subtlety and penetration were not easily imposed upon, and he resolved to treat her in her own way. Lively, entertaining, and full of spirits, with the rest of the family, he conducted himself with the coldest formality and reserve towards Rosina. He seemed anxious to avoid her company; preserved a profound silence whenever she spoke;

spoke; and always dropped every subject which tended to mutual conversation. In short, Melford treated her with so much neglect, that Rosina began to be very seriously alarmed, and to conjecture that she had sacrificed her real happiness to ridiculous etiquette.

ONE morning as Rosina was sitting in the drawing-room, writing to her aunt, Eliza suddenly rushed in, followed by Melford, who had been teasing her to romp with him. "You are really very impertinent, Captain Melford," cried Eliza. "I beg you will desist, or I shall place myself under the protection of Miss Ouseley, and request of her to check your boldness."

"I BEG

“ I BEG ten thousand pardons,” exclaimed Melford, “ for this intrusion; I did not know the lady was writing.—
 “ Come, Eliza, come away; I must request that you will not interrupt her.—
 “ Come.”

“ Not with you, truly,” replied Eliza, with saucy familiarity.

“ WELL, come into the library, then,” said Melford, “ and I will not tease you any longer. Come, and I will read the new play to you as you desired me.”

“ No, I will wait till Rosina has finished her letter,” said Eliza, “ and we will then come together.”

“ OH, Madam,” replied Melford, “ if you have provided yourself with a com-
 VOL. II. I “ panion,

“panion, you cannot possibly want any
“one to read to you. Besides, I have
“letters to write.”

“You are the strangest creature in the
“world,” exclaimed Eliza tenderly;
“but you shall read to me; and we will
“not disturb Miss Ouseley a moment
“longer; for I am sure she cannot write
“a line while you are by.”

CAPTAIN MELFORD seized Eliza’s hand,
and, with a saucy smile, led her from the
room*.

* The conduct of Eliza, in this scene, seems to possess some of that whim and versatility for which the sex has been ill-naturedly condemned by Mr. Pope, in one of his moral Essays: But Sterne, whose heart was open to all the finer sensibilities of nature, has thus defended them.—
“Now I love you for
“this—and ’tis this de-
“licious

ELIZA, when she said that Rosina could not write a line while Melford was by, had very innocently expressed a truth; which Rosina hoped the veil of her affected indifference had impenetrably concealed. Agitated by the *intended offence* which she conceived this abrupt intrusion conveyed, she had, indeed, no power to controul the dictates of her mind, and scarcely strength enough to hold her pen. The gay and laughing manner, in which Eliza had disclosed this mortifying truth, bore, to Rosina's ear, the appearance of irony; and the anxiety with which Mel-

"licious mixture within "PUMPKIN for his head,
 "you which makes you "or a PIPKIN for his
 "dear creatures what you "heart—and, whenever
 "are—and he who hates "he is dissected, 'twill
 "you for it—all I can "be found so." *Trist.*
 "say of the matter is— *Sband. Vol. 5. p. 42. edit.*
 "that he has either a 1762.

ford had solicited Eliza to leave the room the moment she hinted an intention of waiting for Rosina, planted thorns upon her tortured mind. The spectre jealousy took full possession of her breast, and a thousand trivial circumstances now occurred to her tainted fancy, to confirm the notion that Melford had transferred his fondness to Eliza. The pleasing vision of gaining a victory over the haughty spirit of her lover vanished in a moment; and despair with all its black and gloomy train of false ideas occupied her mind. In taking a survey of the hopeful state from which she had fallen, she placed the blameless manners, the gentle temper, the unaffected graces of Eliza, in opposition to the caprice and levity of her own behaviour, and the comparison confirmed the sentiment that jealousy had inspired. She

saw

saw Eliza, like a guardian angel arrayed in all her charms, weaning Melford from his imperious follies, teaching him the sweets of domestic bliss, and winning, by her precepts, his mind to admiration and his heart to love. The dark picture which her disordered imagination brought discoloured to her view was too dreadful to behold; and she burst into tears.

THOMSON, speaking of love, says, when once jealousy diffuses itself through the mind there is an end of all pleasures.

“ — — — — Ye fairy prospects then,
 “ Ye beds of roses, and ye bowers of joy,
 “ Farewel; ye gleamings of departed peace,
 “ Shine out your last. The yellow tinging plague
 “ Internal vision taints, and in a night
 “ Of livid gloom imagination wraps.”

ROSINA, however, felt too proudly upon this subject to afford triumph to a successful rival and a faithless lover by the discovery of her sorrows, and she endeavoured by every consolatory expedient to calm the tumults of her breast. While this prudent resolution was passing in her mind she heard the voice of Melford upon the lawn. She approached the window, and saw his phaeton waiting at the door. He handed Eliza into it; looked up to the window of the drawing-room, and whispered his companion: they both smiled, and the carriage drove away.

“THAT smile,” cried Rosina, “is at my expence.” Her heated mind no longer listened to the cold dictates of the resolution she had formed; and she again burst into a flood of tears.—Dejected from the highest hope; disappointed of the fairest

fairest prospects ; and humbled in her own estimation, she felt the additional mortification of having only her own folly and imprudence to accuse in trifling away the dearest felicity of her life.

DURING the remainder of the day she made every effort to appear chearful and unconcerned ; but pain, like a gnawing vulture, lay silently preying upon her heart. The idea, however, of preventing Melford and Eliza from triumphing in her distress supported her spirits ; and she acted her part with great courage till the hours of sleep called the family to their respective apartments, when she threw herself undressed upon the bed, and lamented, with unavailing sighs and tears, the fatal consequences of her inconsiderate vanity and useless pride.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

The Ecclaircissement.

ROSINA, after passing a sleepless night, went down in the morning to the library, before the family had assembled to breakfast. She was turning over some volumes that were lying on the table, when chancing to glance her eyes round the room she discovered a small portrait of Captain Melford on the opposite compartment of the wainscot. This portrait had been procured by Melford in London at the particular request of Captain Manning, who wished to place it among a collection of pictures of his favourite friends : and he had hung it up here, for the present, the preceding evening.—The
book

book which Rosina had taken up, dropped from her hand, and she hastily quitted the table to examine the portrait with eager curiosity and fond attention.— The artist had been extremely happy in delineating the fine expression of his countenance ; the eyes beamed with that irresistible softness which had so forcibly communicated their influence to her heart, and so often declared that the world without her would be tasteless and insipid. Life seemed to animate every feature. The glow of various emotions appeared in the suffusions of his cheek ; and the lips looked as if they were just opening to pour forth all the dangerous eloquence which dwelt upon his tongue. “ Happy “ Eliza,” exclaimed Rosina, as she leaned her head upon her hand in a posture of meditation—a heavy sigh burst from her

bosom—a tear started to her eye—she was pulling out her handkerchief to wipe it away—when she felt her hand suddenly withheld! She started in amaze; and turning round, beheld CAPTAIN MELFORD! the animated original of the picture at which she was gazing; for, at that moment, every feeling which the painter had so finely portrayed, was visible in his countenance.

THE sudden surprise fascinated all her faculties; and she stood for some moments unable to withdraw her hand. Imagining that she was become indifferent to him, she supposed that the discovery he had made would afford him an opportunity of triumphing over her weakness. The idea shocked her pride. It was insupportable to her feelings. Her limbs began

gan to fail her. She burst into an agony of tears, and sunk breathless upon a chair.

THE resolution which Melford had so successfully maintained of affecting an indifference toward Rosina immediately vanished. He sat down by her side. He gazed upon her with attention. He felt the power of her charms, and when her agitations had decreased, and her mind become composed, he addressed her with all the seriousness and sincerity of true affection.

“AM I, Miss Ouseley,” said he, “to hold myself entirely indebted to chance for the discovery of your sentiments; or may I flatter myself that the natural candour of your mind could not much longer have concealed them from me?”

“ We have both of us, I fear, been tri-
“ fling with the interests of happiness. We
“ have been our own tormentors ; and,
“ instead of promoting our felicity, have
“ heaped unnecessary anxieties upon each
“ other. I shall not now scruple to de-
“ clare that I have loved you from the
“ first moment I saw you ; but, as I am
“ determined to be candid, I must ac-
“ knowledge that my understanding dis-
“ approved of the inclinations of my
“ heart. My passion has been ardent and
“ tumultuous ; but it has wanted that
“ esteem which the approbation of reason
“ can alone produce. While my soul felt
“ the irresistible power of your beauty,
“ your character appeared so volatile and
“ giddy, that I doubted whether I could
“ safely place my happiness in your care ;
“ and I solemnly declare it was your levity
“ alone

" alone which could have induced me
 " to indulge a sentiment against your vir-
 " tue. Whenever I was absent from you
 " I was miserable. The vivacity of your
 " disposition possesses irresistible charms;
 " and at the fatal moment I gave you
 " reason to complain of my integrity, I
 " lamented the conduct which misled my
 " mind. In those quiet and reflecting
 " moments, "*when reason takes her turn*
 " *to reign, and every passion falls before her*
 " *throne,*" how have I regretted that the
 " eccentricity of your spirits was un-
 " tempered by prudence. How often
 " have I wished that the propriety of your
 " conduct had enabled me to make such
 " proposals to you as honour would have
 " dictated, and reason approved."

" THIS

"THIS style of conversation, Sir," cried Rosina, rising in violent agitation from the chair, "is not to be borne. I cannot any longer listen to your insulting discourse."

"OH Rosina," exclaimed Melford, detaining her hand, "this is the most important moment that has ever occurred since our first acquaintance. I love you. I have your interest as well as my own at heart. Call it not an insulting conversation. It is, my Rosina, the solemn language of truth, dictated by the sincerity of my heart, and the purity of my love. To throw aside the deceitful arts of flattery is the strongest proof of my affection; and I have a pride in my nature which makes me wish that the woman I would call my wife should be

"as

“as pure in her mind as she is angelic in
“her person.”

ROSINA re-seated herself.

“INFATUATED by the intemperance of
“thoughtless passion, I assailed your ears
“with a base proposal which I now blush
“to recollect. But Oh ! how firmly did
“that trial of your virtue establish your
“empire in my heart ! The indignation of
“offended innocence, and the honest
“warmth of conscious purity gave a se-
“raphic appearance to your heavenly
“form, which will remain for ever un-
“obliterated on my mind. At that mo-
“ment my conversation, indeed, insulted
“you ; but I have ever since abhorred
“myself for the impious and unwarrant-
“able attempt. Remorse seized my
“mind,

“ mind, and I have lived a pitiable victim
“ from the sense of my transgression. I
“ am not a hardened libertine. The vo-
“ luptuary is, in every sense, a character
“ I despise. But false hopes, false ideas,
“ false wishes led me into the path of
“ error; and by attempting your virtue
“ I disgraced my own. My crime was
“ great; but my punishment has been se-
“ vere. I was banished from your pre-
“ sence; but, alas! I could not be happy
“ without you, and I wished for some
“ means of expiating my offence. To
“ throw myself at your feet; to implore
“ your forgiveness; to solicit an honour-
“ able union; to submit my fortune and
“ myself to your disposal, were the only
“ means which appeared entitled to suc-
“ cess; but I dreaded the danger of con-
“ fiding my honour to one whose only
“ notions

“ notions of happiness seemed concen-
 “ trated in the love of undistinguishing
 “ admiration. Yet greatly apprehensive as
 “ I was, there is no concession that I
 “ should have scrupled to make, in hope
 “ of obtaining your forgiveness, if you
 “ had not threatened me with your bro-
 “ ther’s vengeance. The denunciation
 “ hurt my pride; my haughty soul took
 “ fire at the idea, and set my wounded
 “ feelings in a flame. I left Lansdowne
 “ in a state of distraction; and while my
 “ mind was irritated by the idea your
 “ threat had inspired, I unfortunately
 “ met your brother. The unhappy con-
 “ sequences of that interview you already
 “ know. The kindness of Providence
 “ has, at length, rendered them less fatal
 “ than I had any reason to expect; and
 “ when I reflected to what an unpardon-
 “ able

“able length the intemperance of passion
 “had driven me; that I had again of-
 “fended you by insulting your brother;
 “all hope of forgiveness and reconcilia-
 “tion vanished from my mind. I went
 “to Bath under an idea that the diver-
 “sions of that place would banish your
 “image from my mind; but the waters,
 “alas! had no Lethean opiate to deaden
 “my recollections; and the dissipations
 “in which I engaged only served to re-
 “mind me of those scenes of calm com-
 “fort and superior delight which my
 “fancy so frequently formed in uniting
 “myself with you. During my residence
 “at Bath I received a letter from my
 “friend Manning, in which he informed
 “me that you were here; and well knowing
 “the indelible nature of the passion which
 “possesses my heart, he invited me to
 “visit

“ visit him, upon the strongest assurances
“ that I should find the objectionable
“ parts of your character totally re-
“ formed. My inclinations obeyed the
“ invitation of my friend, and I flew
“ hither upon the wings of love. Ever
“ since my arrival I have been a very cri-
“ tical observer of your conduct ; and the
“ presages of my friend are, I am con-
“ vinced, founded upon the happiest
“ omens. These sentiments may, per-
“ haps, amaze you ; but wild as I may
“ have appeared, I have always admired
“ and venerated the dignity of the female
“ character. There is a certain chastity
“ of deportment which will awe the
“ boldest manners into submissive reve-
“ rence ; it corrects while it softens, and
“ ripens love and fondness into friendship
“ and esteem. To the truth of these ob-
“ servations

"servations I am persuaded your good
 "sense will acquiesce; but since my arrival
 "here you have chosen to treat me with
 "a coldness which has hurt me more
 "than I can express. I imputed it at
 "first to some remains of that coquetry
 "of which I have been complaining; but
 "you persevered in it with so much con-
 "sistency, that I acknowledge I have, at
 "times, been fearful of having lost your
 "esteem. This doubt determined me to
 "force an *éclaircissement* by some means
 "or another; and I certainly should have
 "devised a scheme for this purpose,
 "had not the accident of this morning
 "prevented the necessity of it, and re-
 "lieved me from the fears which I enter-
 "tained. The candour with which I
 "have now conversed with you, Rosina,
 "must

"must convince you of my affection. We
 "have both of us been mistaken; but,
 "conscious of our follies, we have only
 "to amend them. My heart rests on
 "you for its happiness; I have formed
 "plans of felicity which I hope you will
 "assist me to realize. Let this dear hand
 "become the pledge of your pardon, and
 "the cement of eternal peace. Let me,"
 continued he, attempting fondly to press
 her to his bosom, "call you the beloved
 "of my heart, my loved, my now esteem-
 "ed, and more than ever admired Ro-
 "sina."

THIS discourse, at least, convinced Ro-
 sina that her jealousy of Eliza was without
 foundation; but it by no means satisfied
 her mind with respect to the submissive
 apology which she expected to receive
 from

from Melford. Perceiving, therefore, that she still maintained her ascendancy over his heart, she again assumed her resolution to extort from him that humble acknowledgement of sorrow which she thought it was his duty to make; and she accordingly coldly rejected the offer of his hand.

MELFORD was very sensibly mortified by her conduct, and, rising haughtily from the chair, exclaimed, "It is very well, Madam. I must acknowledge I did not expect this behaviour."

At this moment Captain Manning entered the library.—"So, good folks," cried he, "what has been your study this morning? Natural philosophy; the anatomy of a butterfly; or a dissertation

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tion on the tender passions? We have
 "been waiting breakfast for you this
 "hour."—He accordingly took Rosina's
 hand to lead her from the room.—Rosina
 was apprehensive, from the warmth of
 Melford's last observation, that she had
 carried her reluctance rather too far; and
 being willing to prevent a renewal of his
 coldness, she asked Manning if he would
 not also desire his friend's company.

"WHY, my dear," cried Manning,
 "if you are so particularly anxious for it,
 "had you not better desire it yourself?—
 "Here, Captain Melford," exclaimed he,
 "is a lady who begs to know if we
 "shall not be honoured with your com-
 "pany to breakfast."

MELFORD,

MELFORD, who was sullenly tumbling over some books, with the affected smile of a man conscious of his power advanced towards Rosina, and attempted to take hold of her hand. The distress and confusion of her countenance betrayed the awkward situation in which she had involved herself; but, "*still blushing deeper*" "*sweets,*" she turned suddenly about, and leaving the two friends together, ran with precipitation into the breakfast-parlour; where, the family being all assembled, she was safe from the danger of further particular conversation from her disappointed and astonished lover.

BESIDES the hopes of gratifying her pride by obliging the haughty temper of Melford to capitulate upon the terms she had in her own mind prescribed, Rosina

en-

entertained very serious doubts of the propriety of affording any encouragement to his addresses until she had submitted all the circumstances of her situation to her father's consideration; and, knowing that if Melford's professions were sincere, he would not only follow her with pleasure, but approve of such an instance of filial attention, she conceived the idea of departing immediately for this purpose to the vicarage. This resolution, however, was much more the dictate of prudence than of art; she had already experienced the dangers of indulging a secret correspondence; and had seen the dilemma to which her sister was reduced by concealing the inclinations of her heart. She had, therefore, long resolved, if ever Melford should renew his addresses, to submit his pretensions to the judgment and discernment of her indulgent parent; and to

let his approbation alone authorize the hopes of her lover. Melford had himself severely inculcated the lesson of prudence and propriety upon Rosina's mind. His declaration, that there was a period in her life at which he feared to trust his honour to her care, made a very serious impression, and she determined to profit by the information. Her pride and delicacy were equally shocked by the humiliating idea; her sensibility was awakened by the poignancy of the reproof; it conveyed an imputation which smote every feeling of her soul with mortification.

UNDER these painful sensations, the idea of reposing the circumstances of her situation in the bosom of a fond father, whom she justly considered as her truest friend; of alleviating her sorrows by the balm of his

his consolatory tenderness, if her hopes should be eventually disappointed ; or of irradiating her felicity by his approbation, if her wishes should be accomplished; was as highly gratifying to the natural probity of her mind, as it was prudently adapted to secure the ultimate tranquility of her heart.

SHE accordingly communicated to her sister Lydia all that had passed during her accidental interview and *éclaircissement* with Melford ; and requested her advice upon the propriety of her meditated departure. Lydia applauded the spirit and prudence of her sister's resolution in the warmest terms ; and, assuring her that she need not to alarm her mind with fears that Melford would not follow, promised to prepare every thing that was necessary for her departure

parture the ensuing morning, with so profound a secrecy, that Melford should not even suspect the event.

THE alacrity of Lydia afforded Rosina the highest pleasure; and as she was now satisfied that the idea of being rivalled by Eliza was the mere phantom of her own jealousy, she felt her fondness return, and entreated her sister to obtain Mrs. Manning's consent to let her sister-in-law accompany her to the vicarage.

MRS. MANNING, with some reluctance, consented to part with her daughter; and, having taken leave at night of those who knew their intentions, they prepared to set out very early the next morning. The carriage was ready at the hour appointed; and, on Rosina's stepping into it, she looked

looked up at Melford's window. He had perceived that a scheme of some kind was in agitation; and, hearing a chaise drive to the door, had risen from his bed, put on his morning-gown, and was, at the instant Rosina looked up, drawing back the window-curtain to observe what was going forward. Rosina was by no means displeased that he had discovered her departure; for, to speak the truth, the hope that he would immediately follow her was all that supported the depression of spirits which seized her on leaving him in a state of irreconciliation. Her eyes wandered impatiently toward every chaise which approached them on the road; and the perturbation of her mind betrayed her expectation of beholding, before she reached home, the dear object of her heart. No such thing, however,

happened ; and, as the frost was now over, they made such expedition, that they reached the vicarage the following day.

ABOUT a mile from the vicarage they met young Sedgeley, who had been musing upon an adjacent hill, which he had dignified with the title of Parnassus. The honest feelings of Rosina burst forth at the sight of her old acquaintance ; and she stopped the postilion to speak to him. His surprize, however, at seeing her so unexpectedly, was so great that he had scarcely power to speak to her ; but his eyes were perfectly intelligent. During his conversation he caught a glimpse of Eliza's face, as she sat close in one corner of the chaise, endeavouring to conceal herself from his observation, by the shelter of her hat. This concealment excited his curiosity to such a degree,

gree, that Rosina could not help smiling at the various efforts he made to get a peep at her fair companion ; and, pitying his disappointment, laughingly told him that they were not so fatigued but that they should be glad to see a visitor in the evening.

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CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

The Pursuit.

THE unexpected arrival of Rosina at the vicarage diffused the highest pleasure ; and her fair companion received the most cordial welcome.

MISS MARGARET, impatient to hear every incident that had happened since their separation, took the earliest opportunity of retiring with her niece ; but Rosina's heart was too much occupied to relate all the trifles about which her aunt enquired ; and therefore she only mentioned, in a concise manner, what had passed relative to Melford. Though the abruptness of this narration did not gratify Miss Margaret's

garet's curiosity, it afforded infinite satisfaction to the old lady, in whose mind not a doubt remained, but that she should shortly be employed in preparations for the wedding of her favourite niece.

THE account which Rosina gave to her father of the uninterrupted felicity which her brother and sister enjoyed, afforded the warmest comfort to his heart. The happiness of his children was his nightly dream, his daily prayer; and the delight which Rosina's relation gave him, produced in his breast an overflow of joy.

SEDGELEY came in the evening. He was in extacies at seeing Rosina. "So, Sir," said Miss Margaret, "you were agreeably surprised to-day! I suppose your Muse has not been idle upon so fine a

“ subject. Upon my word, it might have
 “ afforded you an infinite number of hap-
 “ py families ; such as, Aurora drawn by
 “ her fleet coursers—the rising moon—
 “ the morning star—

“ CERTAINLY, Madam,” interrupted
 Sedgeley, “ beauty, like the sun, disperses
 “ the mists of dullness ; ripens the latent
 “ seeds of genius ; and, enriching the
 “ barren soil, draws from it those sprouts
 “ of fancy, which, in time, mature into
 “ useful branches of literature.”

THE idea of having acted right, the
 delightful thought of being followed by
 Melford, gave new animation to the mind
 of Rosina, and diffused a lustre over her
 countenance which rendered her more
 captivating than ever. She laughed and
 flirted

flirted with Sedgely in all the complacency of high health and good spirits; insisted, that to captivate he must improve his taste; and assured him, that he was quite unfashionable in not wearing powder: "Prior," continued she, "has certainly celebrated a *nut-brown maid*; but was there ever such a being thought of as a *nut-brown youth*?"

WHEN Sedgely departed, Eliza asked who he was?

"HE is one of our country Adonises," my dear," said Rosina.

"HE is a lover of Miss Ouseley's," exclaimed Miss Margaret.

"MISS OUSELEY, Madam, cried Eliza, is so universally beloved, that I really think we must soon form a combination against

“her for monopolizing all the beaux she chooses to fix her eyes upon.”

ROSINA, anxious to pour the burthen of her heart into the bosom of her father, arose very early the next morning, and repaired to the parlour, where he generally employed an hour before the rest of the family were stirring. She was distressed, confused, and at a loss how to begin. The Vicar perceived that her mind laboured with a burthen she was anxious to disclose, and, kindly soothing her, desired she would conceal nothing from him. She collected courage from his sollicitations, and, after an awful pause, revealed to him all the secrets of her soul.

THE vicissitudes of feeling which the Vicar's heart underwent as Rosina related

lated to him all the circumstances of her acquaintance with Melford, were like the veering vane blown by opposing winds to every part of the compass. Melford's perfidy and base attempt to take an advantage of the unsuspecting levity of his innocent child cut him to the soul; but the rivetted fondness which he saw his daughter entertained for this young libertine, and the safety which her present confidence and candour promised, induced him to suppress the rising anger it occasioned. Anxiously tender for her happiness, and charmed by the explicit confession she had made of her faults, he clasped her to his bosom, and shed tears of rapturous affection over the feelings of his child. He thought prudence the most inestimable virtue of the female character; and he now beheld it in its most amiable point of view. A daughter, whom he tenderly

tenderly loved, had returned from the extravagancies of error into the bosom of rectitude; her mind, reformed by a remembrance of the dangers she had escaped, turning with detestation from the path of obliquity into the road of virtue and happiness.

THE Vicar, in the joy of his heart, complimented Rosina upon the révolution she had thus happily effected; but his tongue was silent respecting Melford. The quickness of Rosina's mind perceived that something, upon this subject, lay lurking at his heart; she flattered herself, however, that Melford's character would, when he arrived, remove every objection that her father might have to their union.

UNDER this hope Rosina counted the coming hours, in anxious expectation of
Melford's

Melford's arrival ; but hour after hour, and day after day elapsed in endless disappointment. She wrote to Lydia, and waited with impatience for an answer ; but the expected time of bringing it arrived, and no answer was received. She began to apprehend she had lost him for ever ; that his pride, offended by her coldness, had induced him to think no more of her ; and, though probity whispered that she had acted consistently with its dictates, her peace of mind was totally interrupted by the painful supposition.

DURING this awkward interval Sedgely continued his visits at the vicarage ; but the Vicar, thinking it dishonourable to encourage his hopes, when he knew his daughter's affections were engaged to another, received him with less cordiality than heretofore. Love is, however, happily blind ;

blind ; and Sedgely, disregarding, or not seeing the Vicar's discouragement, still continued his visits, hoping that time and perseverance would reward his industry with the desired success. The anguish, however, which preyed upon Rosina's mind, from Melford's absence, did not much contribute to confirm his hopes. Her temper, though naturally accommodating and good, grew peevish and splenetic, and the poor curate was compelled to bear with her silence, or endure the brunt of her ill-humour. Miss Margaret, who always sympathized with her niece, treated him just in the same manner ; and from the gentle Eliza alone he received a favourable reception.

ONE evening he brought a poem of his own composing to the vicarage ; and was

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so much flattered with it himself, that he entertained no doubt but it would afford an equal amusement to the ladies. He procured permission to read it ; but scarcely had he got through six lines, when Rosina, struck by the absurdity of some particular passage, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. There is nothing which a man can so little brook as the ridicule of his own productions, because nothing makes him appear in so ridiculous a light to himself ; and the provoking apologies which she made in excuse for her conduct so considerably augmented the anger of Sedgeley, that he was about to quit the room.

ELIZA reprimanded her for her ill-timed merriment ; and bestowed the highest encomiums on the brilliancy of the poem. The young curate, ashamed of the passion into which

which he had been betrayed, re-seated himself in his chair, and, with a silly air, put his production into his pocket.

ELIZA, by becoming the advocate of his verses, won upon his heart. He had never before paid her any particular attention; but he now examined her beauties with the warmest predilection. The soft blue of her eyes, the bewitching sensibility by which they were irradiated, the dimples of complacency which, to use his favourite expression, lay in ambush round her pretty mouth, inspired him with admiration, and he began to draw some comparisons derogatory of Rosina's charms; wondering with himself that the difference of their beauty should have so long escaped his notice.

He

He changed his seat, and sat next to Eliza. He placed on his hand one of the long glossy ringlets which lay on her shoulder. "How beautiful!" he exclaimed; A blush overspread the cheeks of Eliza as he spoke, which confirmed some suspicions Rosina had already began to entertain.

At supper he resigned a place next her for one by Eliza: nor did it escape Miss Margaret; who was not very well pleased at it, as she wished Sedgeley to continue an humble captive to Rosina, in case of accidents. In short, not to make these pages, like Mr. Pope's wounded snake, "*draw their slow length along*," Sedgeley began seriously to admire Eliza; and though she certainly was not so exquisitely beautiful as his former mistress, yet the brilliancy of her understanding placed her

her most justly, he thought, on an equality. The slight Rosina had put on his production convinced him that she had no real genius; and he loved Eliza, who had discovered sufficient taste to applaud its merits.

ROSINA felt the loss of her lover with perfect tranquility. Sedgeley had been more the object of her vanity than her love; and as she had now conquered those ridiculous vagaries which her inconsiderate fondness for adulation had alone inspired, she endeavoured, with generous industry, to induce Eliza to listen to his vows. They seemed, indeed, particularly formed for each other. Gentle, harmless, tender, and compassionate, the calm current of their affections promised a fair and permanent felicity, by being united into one stream. The guardian an-
gels

gels of both could not have formed a wish more propitious to their happiness than that of cementing an union between them.

THE obliging and attentive behaviour of Eliza won so forcibly upon Sedgeley's affections, that he contrived a little dance on her account; and Miss Margaret was not a little piqued at his never having given such a proof of his gallantry to Rosina. On this evening Eliza looked so remarkably well, that no one wondered at the transfer he had made of his affections from Rosina. The light brown hair of Eliza flowed in long and profuse ringlets down her shoulders, and a chip hat trimmed with pale-green ribbon was put on with the simplicity of a village-maid. A gown of cambrick, on which she had worked rose-buds that appeared as if they were just opening

opening their bosoms to the zephyrs of spring, tied up in an artless manner, completed her dress.

DURING the progress of the evening's entertainment the mild character of Eliza produced a great effect upon her lover's heart; and while his tongue poured forth her praise in strains of the warmest eloquence, his eyes followed her through the mazes of the dance with rapturous delight. The party being small and select, the usual rotation of partners was dispensed with; and he had the uninterrupted felicity of dancing with her the whole evening. Their mutual happiness increased as the moments flew. The ardour of Sedgely's admiration animated the features of Eliza, and gave a radiance to her charms they had never before experienced; while
the

the kind flattery of THE GLASS, which she frequently consulted, convinced her that his adulation was not improperly bestowed.

ROSINA was no longer the life and spirit of the company. The delay of Melford's arrival had dissipated the fond conclusions of her mind that he would follow her; and although she could not persuade herself that his recent professions were insincere, yet she felt all the alarm that fear could inspire. The anxieties of suspense lay heavy on her heart. She danced little, talked less, and would willingly have indulged her cares in total silence, had not Mr. and Mrs. Sedgeley forced her into a painful conversation upon the subject of their son's choice, by assuring her how highly they
ap-

approved of his attentions to Eliza, and their resolution to encourage a reciprocal attachment.

WHEN the dance was over, and the hour of departure arrived, Mrs. Sedgely insisted that the ladies should stay and take a bed, for that night, at her house, as her son had settled a party of pleasure for the ensuing morning. Eliza acceded to the proposal with pleasure, and Rosina, in compliment to her, was forced to comply. But Miss Margaret, having very unfortunately fixed on the next day for drawing off some gooseberry wine, which would have been entirely spoiled if it had been neglected, was obliged to relinquish the projected pleasure. She very good-naturedly, however, persuaded the girls

to

to stay, and promised to apologize for it to the Vicar on her return home. But we shall take the liberty of stepping before her to the vicarage, to relate a scene which had passed during her absence.

Vol. II.

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CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

The Surprise.

AS the Vicar was returning from his evening ramble, he observed two gentlemen on horseback, followed by their servants, galloping with great violence along the road towards the vicarage. He stopped to take a nearer survey of them; but his joy, on discovering that one of them was his son-in-law, Captain Manning, was converted into astonishment and consternation, when he perceived the other was Captain Melford, the base insulter of his daughter's virtue.

INDIGNATION seized all the faculties of his soul; he turned precipitately across a field

field into a bye path, and reaching the vicarage before them, hastened into the parlour in painful discomposure. They arrived; and while the horses were led into the yard, Manning entered the house alone. The Vicar received him with all the cordiality of pure affection; but after making some enquiries of the health and happiness of his daughter, the idea of seeing Melford enter occurred to his mind, and he relapsed into his former disquietude. Manning, perceiving the change, attributed it to its true cause, and told him that his friend was waiting without, not daring to approach until he received from him the welcome of kindness and hospitality.—The Vicar continued silent.—Melford was standing at the door, pretending to be busy in giving directions about the horses; but his eyes were turned

towards the parlour; and on receiving a sign of invitation from Manning, he entered the room. His cheeks were crimsoned in blushes of confusion: He appeared, if possible, more affected than the Vicar. A silence of some minutes ensued, which was, at length, interrupted by Melford; who, approaching Mr. Ouseley, thus addressed him.—

“I CANNOT, Sir, again enter this hospitable dwelling, from which I once feared my presumptuous follies had banished me for ever, without feeling the deepest confusion. The bold and licentious extent to which the impulses of unthinking vanity have hurried me, may appear to impeach the integrity of my character; and I candidly confess, that among the variety of events which have

“ com-

"combined to deprive me of your good
 "opinion, there are some which but too
 "justly call for your severest indignation.
 "The reproaches of my own heart, and
 "the coldness of your reception, convince
 "me of the enormity of my transgression.
 "To vindicate my conduct is impossible;
 "and if I were to attempt a palliation,
 "by explaining the circumstances which
 "acted like spells upon my mind, and led
 "me into error, I should betray a want
 "of manly generosity that would increase
 "the nature of my offence. From the
 "native benevolence of your disposition,
 "therefore, and from the sincerity of my
 "own contrition, I can alone hope for
 "pardon. The intoxications of youth
 "and pleasure may have misled my mind,
 "but I am persuaded they have not cor-
 "rupted my heart. Introduced at too

"early a period into all the fashionable
 "dissipations of life, and, perhaps, pos-
 "sessing from nature a wild and volatile
 "temper, I rushed with heedless impe-
 "tus into the vortex of sensual gra-
 "tification; but in the maddest career of
 "folly, reason frequently interposed her
 "powerful voice, and severely condemned
 "the excesses into which the intempe-
 "rance of my passions plunged me. The
 "reign of giddy youth is now over. I
 "have learned wisdom from experience,
 "which, like the skill of the physician,
 "while it discloses the danger of the ma-
 "lady, points out the most probable means
 "of cure. If my mind does not cruelly
 "deceive me, I am persuaded that I shall
 "no longer tread the fatal path which has
 "misled me. The sincerity of my re-
 "pentance will, I trust, procure me your
 "for-

"forgiveness; and be assured, it will be
 "the felicity of my future life to merit
 "your approbation and applause. The
 "certainty of my happiness or my mi-
 "sery is now at your disposal. This is
 "the awful crisis of my fate. The ad-
 "versities which I have hitherto expe-
 "rienced I have borne with composure,
 "and submitted to with resignation; but
 "a disappointment of my present hopes
 "would fill my soul with bitterness, and
 "entail a corroding sorrow upon the re-
 "mainder of my life. Do then, dear
 "Sir, let your consent kindly beam a ray of
 "comfort to my hopes; cast the veil of ob-
 "livion over what has passed; let reconci-
 "liation assure me that I may hope for your
 "favour and affection; and be satisfied that
 "I never gave a pang to the bosom of vir-

"tue without planting a more painful
"dagger in my own."

MELFORD then acquainted the Vicar of the perfect reconciliation which had taken place between Francis and him; and, declaring the fervency of his passion for Rosina, continued, in the most importunate manner, to solicit his consent and approbation.

THE Vicar's breast heaved with the tumult of contending passions while Melford was addressing him. His feelings were too great to be concealed. Tears trickled for some time in quick succession down his cheek; when, suddenly catching hold of the extended hand of Melford, "Enough," he exclaimed; "you have said all that a man of sense and
"honour

"honour can say.—The all-perfect and
 "benevolent Being who surveys the
 "hearts of mortals, receives the re-
 "penting child of error with joy into
 "his bosom. Shall I then refuse contri-
 "tion its reward? He who hopes himself
 "to be forgiven, should learn to forgive
 "the faults of others. The hand of Pro-
 "vidence has preserved *my olive-branches*
 "from perishing; they now flourish un-
 "der the protecting shade of his mercy
 "and divine compassion. The dark
 "clouds which once lowered destruction
 "over my humble roof are now dispersed.
 "In adversity, I trust, I was resigned; in
 "prosperity, I rejoice with meekness.—Be
 "satisfied that what is past shall be obli-
 "terated for ever from my mind."

He paused:—

L 5

A SUD-

A sudden gush of transport throbbing through every vein deprived both Melford and the Vicar of the power of utterance : All the refined and extatic sensibilities of nature crowded to their hearts : Every faculty of the human soul was, for a moment, absorbed by the exquisite tenderness of their feelings.

MANNING, by an involuntary motion, lifted his handkerchief to his eyes.

THE Vicar, at length recovering, suddenly proceeded :—

“ Rosina shall be your’s! I know every
 “ winding of her heart; and, I believe, in
 “ uniting her with you, she will have every
 “ chance of happiness. She—but I will
 “ avoid retrospection—like yourself, now
 “ treads the path of reformation; and be
 “ convinced, Captain Melford, however
 “ blindness may heretofore have warped
 “ its

" its amiable qualities, you will still find
 " her mind the seat of innocence, and
 " her heart the shrine of virtuous sensibi-
 " lity. The most important cares of my
 " life will, by this union, be accomplished,
 " Blessed ! thrice blessed ! be that Power
 " which, by affording felicity to my chil-
 " dren, has placed a crown of glory as well
 " as peace upon my aged head ; encircled
 " my grey locks with wreaths of joy ; and
 " given me a staff of comfort to support
 " and strengthen my wearied footsteps in
 " their passage to the grave."

This affecting apostrophe was followed
 by a universal silence. At length, the
 Vicar, recovering from his reverie, de-
 sired Captain Manning to sit by his side.
 " How is the health of your good mo-
 " ther ? Is my little Lydia happy and in

228 THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

"good spirits? Is the Doctor and his wife well?" said the Vicar.

As these enquiries diverted the conversation from the subject which was the most interesting and important to Melford's feelings, he asked the Vicar, with a look of disappointment, if he might not be permitted to see the ladies. The Vicar recollecting that he ought to have announced their absence before, expressed great mortification in being obliged to tell Melford that they were out.

"Out!" repeated Melford with an emphasis and surprize. "Pray, Sir, where are they gone?"

The Vicar then informed his visitors of Sedgeley's gallantry; and hinted in pretty plain

plain terms to Manning, that he believed the ladies were obliged to his sister Eliza for the invitation they had received.

MELFORD earnestly requested that Manning would immediately accompany him to Sedgeley's house; but Manning raised a thousand objections to a conduct so precipitate and improper. Melford intreated him then to send a message announcing their arrival; but he started the same objections; and Melford was forced to submit with patience to the unaccommodating opinions of his friend. The truth was, that Manning wished to contrive some little plot for the meeting of the lovers, which this premature intelligence of their arrival would have entirely destroyed.

THE fatigue of the long journey they had taken; the solemnity of the conversation which had ensued; and the mortification of not immediately beholding Rosina, and hearing from herself the ratification of his wishes, so totally overpowered Melford, that soon after the supper was over he betrayed strong symptoms of weariness. Being assured that the ladies would not return till it was extremely late, he at length therefore complied with the Vicar's pressing entreaties of retiring to his chamber. Manning, after some private conversation with the Vicar, was also persuaded to retire to rest, and the Vicar was left alone to the indulgence of his meditations till the ladies should arrive.

THE Vicar was a little disappointed when he found that his sister returned alone:

She

She was equally surprized at finding her brother up, contrary to his usual custom. There was something mysterious in the circumstance, and she began to question him concerning the cause of it, saying, he must have been very lonesome during so many hours.—“Not so lonesome as you imagine, Margaret: I have been entertained with very agreeable company.”

“Mr. COLLINS, I suppose? But he did not stay long here, I am sure, when he found that we were from home.”

“It was not Mr. Collins, I assure you,” replied the Vicar. “Now, Margaret, set all your wits to work to discover who it was.”

SHE

SHE mentioned two or three characters in the neighbourhood who occasionally visited the Vicar.

"SUPPOSE," said the Vicar, "it was a relation—suppose it was a friend—suppose it was two officers who came to be billeted here."

"OH! as I hope to be saved," cried she, "it is Melford and Manning. Captain Melford come to marry Rosina!"

THE Vicar smiled.

"I ALWAYS knew this," continued she, starting from her chair and overturning it; "the lines of good luck were always evident in my niece's countenance."

"DEUCE

"DEUCE take your chair, Margaret," exclaimed the Vicar, "it has broken my
"shins."

"LORD, brother, I am in such a flurry!" continued Miss Margaret. "Tell me, brother, tell me all he said. Sweet, dear fellow, I would not have missed such a scene for all the world!—Lord, Lord, what a situation Rosina will be in when she hears of his arrival! He will make a noble settlement on her, I warrant you. —She shall come down once a year, I protest, in her coach and four to the village with two footmen at least, to visit Mrs. Norris and the neighbours."

"TAKE care of your apron, Margaret," said the Vicar.—She had given herself

herself so many twirls that the fire had singed a corner of it:

“WELL, well,” said she, “I don’t grudge this corner, though it is my best Brussels pattern, for it is an indubitable sign of a wedding; but where is the dear fellow? Let me fly to him.”

“Oh! stop, stop, Margaret, he is just gone to rest.”

“To bed he may be gone, brother, but not to rest. He who experiences all the tumults of love—all the restless anxieties of that tender passion—all—in short, brother, it is a contradiction in nature to say a man in love can sleep; so I insist on going immediately to see him.”

THE

THE Vicar was obliged to interpose his commands, or Miss Margaret would certainly have disturbed Melford by a visit. She then insisted that an express should be immediately dispatched for Rosina; but the Vicar made her acquainted with the scheme which Manning had concerted of surprising his sister-in-law by the sudden appearance of her lover; and Miss Margaret was at length, with some difficulty, persuaded to retire to her chamber.

THE influence of habit, however, is not easily removed; and it had been the uniform practice of Miss Margaret's life to carry all the inclinations of her mind, by one mean or another, into execution. The idea, therefore, which had suggested itself of paying Melford a visit accompanied her to her chamber, and the flutter
of

of joy which his arrival afforded prevented her from seeing its impropriety. The Vicar's objections had proceeded upon the fear of disturbing his rest; but as she was convinced of the impossibility of a lover being able to sleep, this reason appeared idle and unsatisfactory. These reflections passed in her mind while she was undressing, and by the time she was almost prepared to step into bed, had worked so powerful an effect, that she suddenly resolved at all events to pay Melford a charitable visit, and endeavour, by her social converse, to chase away the dark and dismal hours in which she fancied he would otherwise pass the night.

SHE proceeded accordingly towards the room in which he lay; but, having reached the door, a sentiment of delicacy occurred, and

and stopped her ingress. She debated with herself upon the propriety of this measure for some time. To afford quietude and comfort to the restless spirit of a lover was an act of pious charity ; beside, he was the lover of her niece, and that circumstance alone, she thought, was sufficient to remove all imputation of indecorum. At length, the idea of promoting the most essential interests of Rosina, by seizing this opportunity to persuade Melford to make her a handsome allowance in pin-money, conquered every scruple, and she entered the room.—All was silent.—She doubted whether to advance or retreat.—During this state of suspense a favourite cat which had followed Miss Margaret into the room leaped suddenly on the bed, and began to play with one of Melford's curls. He awoke. “What confounded thing are you?”

"you?" said he, starting up and catching her by the throat. The cat squalled, and he flung it off the bed.

A voice like the breezes of the spring broke unexpectedly upon his ear. "My dear Captain Melford, excuse this intrusion," cried Miss Margaret; "pardon the liberty I have taken; and believe that it originates from good-nature alone.—I pitied you, by all the powers of sympathy."

MELFORD, more asleep than awake, did not recollect her voice. "By all the powers of conjuration," exclaimed he, "who or what are you?"

"It is your aunt Mangery that is to be, Captain Melford," she continued.

"I knew

"I knew you could not sleep, and so I
 "determined to visit you. Your affec-
 "tions are fixed, and therefore there can-
 "not be any impropriety in it. Beside,
 "the world knows the steadiness of my
 "principles; and it also knows," added
 she with a laugh, "*that Brutus is an ho-*
 "*nourable man.*"

"Mr dear Madam," cried Melford,
 "you are extremely obliging; but I must
 "request it of you, as a singular favour,
 "that you will not deprive yourself of
 "rest on my account."

"Don't be too much agitated," cried
 she, sitting down beside the bed, and lay-
 ing her candle on a table while she open-
 ed the curtains.

He

He entreated her to return to her chamber.

“PRAY keep yourself quiet,” said she,
 “though I know the palpitations inseparable to such a state as your’s. Ah!
 “Captain Melford, how many will envy
 “you? Such a girl as Rosina is not the
 “fortunate lot of every one. Well, after
 “all, though I am her aunt, I must say,
 “it is not often one sees the like of her:
 “take her all in all, you will scarcely find
 “one equal to her. And then, beside
 “her external perfections, her internal
 “worth, her taste for works of ingenuity
 “—she is, I assure you, the best hand in
 “the world at a piece of patch-work, and
 “none can surpass her in the design of a
 “fire-screen. Take my word, while I
 “am with you, your house shall be no-
 “ticed

“riced for pickles and preserves; and,
 “without boasting, I can, out of my own
 “wardrobe, make your wife as fine a bride
 “as any that has been in the country
 “these twenty years: my bloom-coloured
 “filk and flowered chintz shall be her’s
 “immediately. Besides these, I have moss,
 “shells, and feathers to ornament a
 “room with after the plan of the Lady in
 “the World. There shall be an alcove
 “at the upper end; and, if you know
 “a skilful artificer, he may easily exe-
 “cute a small Cupid, which we can
 “adorn with the plumage of a peacock’s
 “tail, and give into his hands a blue
 “curtain to support. Ah! Captain
 “Melford, though my brother is but a
 “poor Vicar, our family was once very
 “respectable. There were a number of us:
 “I was the youngest, and stiled the Rose.

“ bud. A young gentleman in the neigh-
 “ bourhood, a fine fellow, like yourself,
 “ Captain Melford, used to bring me
 “ fruit and flowers. He was pronounced
 “ my lover ; and when he saw me beckon
 “ to him from the bow-window, he would
 “ plunge shoes and all into the river,
 “ which ran across the meadow. I called
 “ him my LEANDER ; and he would
 “ say, My sweet soul, were the river
 “ deep enough, and it were possible, I
 “ would drown myself ten thousand
 “ times, and each time think myself hap-
 “ pier than LEANDER in dying for one
 “ so infinitely superior to HERO.”

CAPTAIN MANNING, who slept in an
 adjoining room, was awakened by the loud
 clack of Margaret's tongue ; and, unable
 to suggest from whence it could proceed at
 that

that late hour, resolved to find out what it was that had disturbed his repose. Groping in the dark for Melford's apartment, from whence he thought the sounds proceeded, he stumbled. "As I live," said Melford, "there is Manning breaking his bones."

MANNING, at last, found out Melford's door. "What confounded noise is this you are making?" cried he.

"Hush," said Melford, "you don't know whom I have got with me."

MISS MARGARET, on hearing his voice, instantly rushed forward. "My dear nephew," exclaimed she, "you are welcome, extremely welcome to the vicarage. You are surprized, I am sure, to find me here; but certain

“that Captain Melford could not sleep, I
“came to sit with him.”

“How excessively good-natured you
“are !” said Manning.

“For mercy’s sake, my dear Manning,”
whispered Melford, “carry her off with
“you ; my head is distracted with her clat-
“ter, and I can neither get up or lie
“down while she continues here.”

“Oh ! if I do,” said Manning, “may
“I be blessed myself with the felicity of
“her company ! Captain Melford, Ma-
“dam,” he continued, “declares you have
“laid him under everlasting obligations by
“this proof of your regard ; you could not
“have acted in a more charitable manner.
“When I lived in the barracks with him,
“I have

“ I have known him obliged to get the
 “ fifer of the regiment to compose his
 “ spirits when in bed : how much more
 “ powerful then must be the soft notes
 “ which fall from a lady’s tongue.” He
 then made a speedy retreat, and Melford’s
 head, which he had vainly endeavoured to
 support, sunk in sleep upon the pillow.

“ LEANDER,” continued Miss Marga-
 ret, “ went out one day to shoot grouse :
 “ he had just fired, when——do you
 “ hear ?——”

“ UMPH !” said Melford.

“ HE had just fired, I say.—Lord bless
 “ me, you are not attending !”—She now
 perceived that Melford was asleep. “ Well,”
 said she, “ I find that love will not pre-

“serve us from being mortal. If Sedge-
“ley were here, he would be very
“apt to say, that Morpheus had mixed
“his poppies amongst the rose-buds
“of Cupid.”—She then took her candle
and repaired to her chamber.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH.

The Surprise.

THE Vicar arose by the first dawn of day ; and, ordering Susan to be routed up, dispatched her to Sedgely's to beg Miss Rosina's company at home directly ; " but " I charge you, Susan," says he, " not to " give her the smallest hint of what has " passed during her absence."

" WHY no, to be sure, Sir, if you desire not."

" AND if I find you mind me, Susan, " you shall have something as a reward for " your silence, I assure you."

M 4

" WHAT,

"WHAT, Sir?" asked Susan with a look of eager expectation.

"WHY, I will give you a new hymn-book."

"O LORD, Sir!" exclaimed Susan disappointed.

"AND perhaps," added the Vicar, "a new ribbon with it."

"LORD, Sir, you can't doubt my veracity. By my truly, I won't tell a syllable of the matter." When her master's back was turned, Susan looked into the glass to see if her cap was prettily put on, and then tripped away.

UPON her arrival at Sedgeley's she met Willy, the gardener, at the gate. "So, Mrs. Susan,"

Susan," said he, "where are you going this morning as sweet and as fresh as a rose?" " 'Tis a marvellous fine thing to see you now-a-days."

"Don't ask me any questions, Willy," cried she, "and you'll get no rude answers. I want to go to my young lady, so pray don't keep me here." There was sufficient room for her to have passed at the other side of the gate, but she did not pretend to see it, and Willy paid her some more rustic compliments.

"Come, my sweet little Susy," said he, "let us stroll into the garden; 'tis a long time since I had the pleasure of giving you any fruit. There is one plum-tree old Madam has been nursing up,

"up, but it shall go hard if you and I
 "can't get at it."

YOUNG SEDGELEY, at this moment,
 made his appearance; and Susan proceed-
 ed to the house.

ELIZA was walking in the garden; Ro-
 fina was still in bed; and Susan was
 shewed up to her room.

"HAS any thing happened at home,
 "Susan," said Rosina, "to bring you
 "here so early?"

"HAPPENED, Ma'am?" repeated Su-
 san, with a simper: "Oh nothing, Ma'am;
 "but master has a power of things to tell
 "you, and begs you will return home
 "directly."

"I AM

“ I AM sure something has passed, or he
“ would never send for me in this man-
“ ner.”

“ WHY do you suppose so?” said Susan.
“ But pray, Miss Rosina, did you dream
“ of a looking-glass last night? If you
“ did, I shall certainly say, it was a sign
“ of your seeing some one this morning
“ you don’t expect.”

“ TELL me,” said Rosina, “ I desire
“ you, what is the meaning of all this?”

“ OH lud,” cried she, “ I shall break
“ my word!—No, by my truly, but I will
“ not.—Yet, to be sure, I know,—to be
“ sure, I know where Somebody is. His eyes
“ are as bright as the day, and his coat is as

"fine as fine can be, and he would give
 "a purse of gold for one peep at you."

"TELL me," said Rosina, sitting up, and laying her trembling hand on Susan's, with a look that almost frightened the poor girl, "tell me, I conjure you, tell me, is not Captain Melford at my father's house?"

"LORD, what a guess you have!" cried Susan.

ROSINA fell back on her pillow. A variety of contending emotions danced in quick succession through her heart, and quite overcame her. Her colour faded, and she appeared fainting. Susan, alarmed at her situation, cried out, "Oh! she is dying!" and wrung her hands in great agony.

"'Tis

" 'Tis I have done all this mischief,"
said she, " and my master will kill me."

A TORRENT of tears came fortunately to the relief of Rosina. She wept, laughed, and talked alternately for some moments, without being perfectly sensible of what she was doing. The first tumults of joy and surprize subsiding she arose, and desired Susan to assist her in dressing, that she might not lose a minute of that time which was now become so valuable to her happiness.

ELIZA, though she particularly rejoiced on every account at the arrival of her brother and Captain Melford, felt a little mortified, though she would not confess it, at being obliged to defer the projected rambling party with Sedgeley

— — — — — " not unseen

" Through hedge-row elms and alleys green."

FANCY

FANCY had formed a scene of the most romantic pleasure in her mind, from the rural perambulation which young Sedgeley had proposed; and she returned to the vicarage with reluctance and mortification. The bosom of Rosina, on the contrary, beat with the highest pulse of joy: her eyes sparkled with emanations of delight: and she flew toward her native home with nervous alacrity. Upon her approaching the house, however, she recollected the triumph which this discovery of her feelings might afford to the haughty and unconquered spirit of her lover, and, calling all the powers of dissimulation to her aid, endeavoured to assume an air of composure and indifference as she entered the room. The Vicar, who was alone, received her with a smile so cordially significant, that if she had been ignorant

ignorant of what it omened, she might
with certainty have prophesied there was

— — — — — “joyful news at hand.”

“His bosom’s Lord sat lightly on his throne,

“And all the time, an unaccustomed spirit

“Lifted him above the ground with cheerful

“thoughts.”

ROMEO and JULIET:

“WELL, Rosina,” cried the Vicar as
he clasped her hand, “I hope you were
“entertained by your amusements yester-
“day evening?”

“OH! extremely, indeed,” replied
Rosina.

“COULD it not have been increased by
“the presence of some one person who
“was not there?”

“YES,

"Yes, Sir," replied Rosina, "your presence would have completed my happiness."—Conscience upbraided her as she spoke; and a blush of confusion accompanied the dissembling indifference by which she hoped to conceal the tumult of joy that revelled in her breast.

"You are a little hypocrite, I am sure," cried the Vicar, tapping her cheek, "and must be severely punished for this affectation."—The Vicar immediately left the room.

THE solitude to which his sudden departure left Rosina would have more than surprised her upon any other occasion, but she suspected that it was a prelude to some little plot which, from Susan's intelligence she conjectured, was intended to be formed. The absence of her aunt and Melford strengthened

strengthened the idea; and she waited for a short time in expectation of the *denouement*, amidst a conflict of the tenderest passions. Finding, however, that if any plot was in agitation, it was not yet ripe for execution, she stole softly up stairs to Eliza; adjusted her dress, which from the early hour of the morning had been carelessly huddled on; looked in the glass for a few moments; pulled off her hat; undid her hair; dressed it again; burst into an immoderate fit of laughter; wept with violent agony; dried her tears; laughed again; and pestered poor Eliza with an incessant rotation of silly and tormenting questions.

WHILE these affections were driving the nerves of Rosina to the brink of hysterics, Melford, rendered drowsy by the agitations

agitations of his mind, and the interruptions of Miss Margaret's visit, was enjoying the sweets of a temporary slumber; his mind occupied by dreams of heavenly delight. Suddenly a violent noise, occasioned by the fall of a pile of band-boxes which Rosina had thrown down in the hurry of searching for a favourite cap, awakened him. Starting up in his bed, under an expectation that Miss Margaret and her purring attendant were paying him a second visit, he drew back the curtains; and perceived the sun-beams dancing in the room. They silently upbraided his supineness; and hastily quitting his pillow, he prepared himself to see the dear object of his heart. Just as he had finished dressing, he thought he heard the pattering of female feet descending the stairs. He opened the door, and caught
a glimpse

a glimpse of Rosina. He instantly followed her; and they both entered the parlour door at the same instant of time. Their mutual agitations discovered the violence of their feelings. Rosina vainly endeavoured to conceal her emotions; her eyes betrayed the secret of her heart; and the warm blushes which tinged her cheeks were, to a man of Melford's discernment, the unerring evidence of love. He gazed upon her for a few moments in speechless extasy: then bowing obsequiously towards her, and assuming an air of gaiety, he asked her, with a saucy smile, if Merlin's spell hung over her that morning? She affected to frown; but the impulse of nature was irresistible, and she burst into a fit of laughter.

He

He caught her hand.—“ Oh ! Rosina,”
 said he, “ what words shall paint my
 “ transport ? Every unhappy difference is
 “ now obliterated ; and, by parental au-
 “ thority, I am to call you mine.”

“ REALLY,” said she, “ upon my word,
 “ this is very extraordinary ; your com-
 “ pany is quite unexpected, and my fa-
 “ ther”—

“ SAID you were mine !” cried Mel-
 ford, interrupting her. “ Do not trifle,
 “ therefore, my Rosina, but declare that
 “ his words are the words of truth.”

“ No, no, Captain Melford, you
 “ shall never again have occasion to ac-
 “ cuse me of imprudence, I assure you ;
 “ nor

“nor without the immediate sanction of
“my father’s presence will I.”—

“Thus then,” said he, snatching her
hand which she had withdrawn, “I seize
“your beauteous hand as the pledge of
“eternal amity and increasing love. From
“this propitious hour, registered may it
“be in the annals of felicity! The era
“of my happiness commences in calling
“you, by his consent, for ever mine.”

“Then be satisfied, Captain Melford,”
said she, while a gentle tear stole down
her cheek, “that since neither reason,
“prudence, nor parental authority oppose
“my choice, every wish of my heart is
“gratified in giving you my hand.”

A

At this critical moment the Vicar precipitately entered the parlour. Tears found a ready passage down his cheeks; and he folded their united hands to his joyful bosom.

“Happy, happy pair!” he cried in affectionate transports. “Your union beams with the fairest prospects of felicity. Lessons derived from experience have taught you the inestimable value of prudence and virtue. You have learned precepts of true wisdom in the school of adversity. The pains you have both of you felt from the consequences of folly, have opened your eyes to the dangers of that *wildness* on the one hand, and *levity* on the other, which cast so deep a shade over the native purity of your hearts. Convinced of
“ your

“ your errors, you will avoid their repeti-
 “ tion. The bright faculties of your
 “ minds, now unobscured, will rise up
 “ to fulfil the noble purposes for which
 “ they were originally designed, and you
 “ will become good and useful members
 “ of society. Thrice fortunate are they,
 “ who by timely efforts start uncontami-
 “ nated from the quicksands of folly and
 “ the gulph of vice. Providence will
 “ extend its supporting hand to cheer the
 “ labours of returning virtue; bestow
 “ courage to resist, and fortitude to bear,
 “ the pains and dangers of the glorious
 “ toil. The light of heaven will every
 “ moment break upon their progress;
 “ dispel the gloom which hides the thorny
 “ maze of error; and place before their
 “ view the bright primrose path of truth
 “ and virtue.”

THE

THE continuation of this preceptive and affectionate address was interrupted by the appearance of Miss Margaret, who rushed suddenly into the room half frantic with joy. She embraced her niece with oppressive extacy; laughed, cried, and seemed scarcely sensible of what she was about. She ran violently and with rapture toward Melford to kiss him; but recollecting herself in time stopped suddenly short: He, however, with great gallantry, insisted on taking what she seemed so willing to give.

SHE apologized to him for the disturbance of her nocturnal visit, assuring him that it proceeded from good-nature alone. This produced an explanation, and the Vicar would certainly have given her a severe lecture upon the impropriety

propriety of her conduct, had not Melford contrived to divert his mind to another subject of conversation. She could not refrain, however, from whispering her brother, that though he might be displeased at her conduct, she was certain her visit would be of infinite advantage to Rosina, by contributing to encrease the settlement which she had so fully impressed the necessity of on Melford's mind.

THE Vicar smiled at the extravagance of her affectionate zeal.

MANNING and his sister now entered the room. The latter tenderly embraced Rosina; expressed her happiness at the reception Melford had met with; and, after the usual enquiries had passed, they all sat down to breakfast.

A SMILE of satisfaction wantoned in every face. Hints on every side had been very freely circulated relative to Eliza and young Sedgeley. Melford, who still delighted in a little mischief, turned gravely to the blushing girl. "I am very sorry, Ma'am," cried he, "that at this happy juncture we are to lose the pleasure of your company."

"To lose my company!" said Eliza, turning pale: "Why?"

"MRS. MANNING declares she cannot exist a moment longer without seeing you; and insisted that the chariot should follow us to take you home."

"ARE you serious?" exclaimed Eliza.

"YES,"

"Yes," interposed her brother, "he is certainly serious. You can have no objection to return home with me; Lydia is longing to see you."

"SURELY I hear the carriage," said Melford, starting from his seat; and, in fact, his phaeton, which he had ordered to follow him, now appeared driving up the road.

MANNING, perceiving that his sister was deeply affected, smiled, and convinced her it was all a jest, while Eliza, trembling with confusion, wiped away her tears. Sedgeley, at this instant, made his appearance. He was introduced to the gentlemen, and with a diffident air presented his mother's compliments to the company, hoping that it would

N

not

not be disagreeable to them to pay her a visit, and pursue the little scheme of rural pleasure which he had planned the preceding night.

THE spirits of the party were all tuned to harmony, and they complied without hesitation. Every thing was adjusted in a moment; but before they could set off, the good lady herself drove to the door in a cabriole chair and a pair of ponies. Miss Margaret was offered a place in it; but her ambitious views aimed at procuring a seat in Melford's phaeton; and nothing else would satisfy her.—This unexpected interloperment cruelly disappointed the inclinations of both Rosina and Melford, whose minds had been anticipating the pleasures of the *séte-à-séte* which the phaeton would afford. Before Miss Margaret, therefore, had perfectly seated herself, Melford gave his spirited horses a fly

a fly cut with the whip, which set them on prancing and curvetting to so violent a degree that he alarmed the fears of his fair intruder.

“BLESS me, Madam,” cried Melford, “I hope you are not apt to be frightened! The horses are now and then inclined to be restive, to be sure; but I’ll manage them; I’ll teach them to prance.” He then gave them a more severe cut, under pretence of making them stand still; but, instead of permitting it to produce that effect, he made them, by checking the reins, only plunge and rear more dreadfully. “Let me get out,” cried Miss Margaret, “let me get out directly. I would not venture my neck with two such furious devils for all the world.” The horses stood

very complaisantly still while Miss Margaret alighted; and she endeavoured to dissuade Rosina from taking her place, saying, that Melford would certainly break her neck.

"If I do," replied he, as Rosina seated herself by his side, "I shall be more unfortunate than Phaeton;" and the carriage wheeled away.

In their way to Sedgely's, they were obliged to pass the skirts of the grove where so critical a scene had formerly engaged them. Rosina blushed; a higher colour flushed the cheeks of Melford, who, taking her hand by a sort of instinctive sympathy, exclaimed, "Oh, my Rosina! you
 "may guess my feelings when I com-
 "pare the present with the past; when I
 "indulge the sweet idea of calling you ho-
 "nourably

"nourably mine; and remember the notions which once disgraced my mind."

THE place to which they repaired was a romantic valley, in which were natural recesses formed by the thick branches of trees entwined together; a babbling brook ran through its bottom, and birds sung in every bush. A cold collation had been here previously prepared; and Sedgely, who adored every thing which bore the least similitude to Arcadian scenes, had provided music. When the repast was over he led off the dance with Eliza, on a green and level spot of ground, well chosen for the purpose.

THE finest phrenzy of poetic imagination never formed a scene of pleasure more enchanting and sublime, than that

which warmed the hearts of this rural party; and they continued to enjoy their happiness till the moon had shed the silver of her beams upon all around. They then repaired to Sedgeley's to supper, where Hospitality and her handmaid Cheerfulness presided at the board.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH.

The Conclusion.

FAME resounded through the country the approaching nuptials of Melford and Rosina ; and called the hissing snakes of Envy from their dark retreats : but LOVE and VIRTUE soared regardless of their envenomed tongues ; and reached the heights of earthly happiness. The hymeneal day only waited for the arrival of their friends ; and, on their return from Sedgeley's, letters were immediately dispatched with pressing entreaties that they would hasten to the vicarage. The tedious interval of expectation was enlivened by the exertions of that charming talent which Captain Man-

ning peculiarly possessed, of beguiling time, and rendering all around him happy.

MANNING's mother, his wife, Francis and Maria, together with some other friends, soon arrived; and the joy of the Vicar and his sister, on being once more surrounded by his family, was so great, that they entirely forgot the impossibility of accommodating them all with beds, until the hour of rest brought it to their minds. This difficulty, however, after producing some pleasantry, was obviated by the hospitality of Mrs. Sedgely, who immediately ordered the necessary provisions to be made, and entertained her guests with willing cordiality. This kindness was not altogether disinterested; she thought that her civility might promote the hap-

happiness of her beloved You, to which, she justly conceived, there was nothing more essential than his union with Eliza. Influenced by this idea, she seized the first favourable opportunity of disclosing her sentiments to Mrs. Manning. An interview between the old folks was appointed upon the subject, and their proposals were so extremely liberal and open, that both Captain Manning and his mother immediately signified their consent. On questioning Eliza concerning the state of her heart, she candidly confessed her partiality for Sedgeley; and Manning declared it was his intention to give her the fortune he had always promised her, if she married with his approbation. Young Sedgeley was accordingly introduced; and Eliza, like her lover's favourite *Lavinia*,
 - in origin - *gala* N 6 *most* *and* *on* *the*
 bottom

"all in sweet disorder lost," blushed compliance to his wishes.

HYMEN again attended the altar with his double torch. Sedgeley was first married to Eliza; and the hour in which the Vicar performed the ceremony, and united his darling child to the beloved object of her affection, left him without one worldly wish ungratified. He whose happiness had uniformly been, to relieve the suffering offspring of virtuous indigence, was now enabled to rejoice at the felicity of his own. May such ever be the reward of virtue!

THE extravagance of joy which assailed the ears of poor Miss Margaret from every quarter totally deranged her ideas; and she was from morning till night immersed

merged in a fruitless bustle of her own making.

THE vicarage, indeed, exhibited such a scene of jocund pleasure and refined delight, that the excursive freedom of a fertile fancy can alone do justice to the joy which sprung in every breast, and burst from every tongue. The recent nuptials of the double pair introduced a remembrance of the similar ceremonies which Manning and Lydia, Francis and Maria, had before performed; and filled their minds with correspondent felicity. It was the propitious reign of HYMEN; and those imaginations which PARENTAL FONDNESS and the comforts of CONNUBIAL LOVE inspire, will form a picture of delight, from the present situation of the Vicar and his family, which the puny powers

powers of description would vainly endeavour to delineate. The anxieties of his virtuous heart for the prosperity of his children were gratified equal to his warmest wish, and beyond his highest expectations: and while he beheld, with rapture, increasing prospects of uninterrupted happiness rising to their view, he turned his mind with piety to Heaven, in grateful acknowledgements for the blessings it bestowed.

AFTER staying a considerable time at the vicarage, in kindness to the tender and affectionate feelings of the Vicar, who found it extremely difficult to separate, the several families departed to their respective mansions; and as their departure will finish our campaign, it is necessary that our book, like the temple of

Janus,

Janus, should be closed. We must, however, take the liberty to follow the troops we enlisted into our service from the active bustle of the field into the privacy of COUNTRY QUARTERS, in order to recount, with greater truth and certainty, their several destinations.

CAPTAIN MANNING, in a short time, quitted the army. His disposition was too placid to relish the dissipation of a military life; and too cheerful not to cultivate the society of sprightly and rational beings. His mind formed the sweetest plans of domestic bliss, which the virtuous affection of Lydia contributed in every instance to realize. No one action of her life ever disappointed his expectations. Time confirmed the professions which truth and goodness, from the first

10 THE VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

first dawns of her youth, had established in her favour; and as the hours rolled away, she experienced the reward of virtue by increasing felicity.

FRANCIS, conformable to the wishes of his parent, obtained his diploma from the University of Edinburgh, and entered upon the honourable profession of physic. He resides constantly at the vicarage; and the serene but florid complexion of his countenance is no bad recommendation of his skill in preserving the health and constitution of others. Mrs. Ouseley is the young and lovely Lady Bountiful of the neighbourhood; and there is not a peasant within the vicinity of the vicarage who has not ample reason to bless its inhabitants. The Vicar is so extrava-

• Vide BEAUX STRATAGEM.

gantly

gantly fond of Maria, that he can scarcely bear her out of his sight; and he frequently declares, that had his son and daughter claimed *the celebrated fitch of bacon*, he could, with honest truth, have given the clearest evidence how well they deserved it.

CAPTAIN MELFORD, in a course of time, followed the example of his friend Manning, and disposed of his commission in the army. He has built a very elegant house upon the most fertile part of his estate, and being surrounded by a society of elegant and hospitable families, a constant intercourse of gaiety and good-humour prevails among them. — As they live near Bath, Mr. and Mrs. Melford have frequent opportunities of enjoying a little of that dissipation, for which, perhaps, they

they will always retain some inclination. Rosina, however, adheres so invariably to the strict line of prudence, that, during a visit to London, she never encouraged the smallest flirtation; and was once so much offended by the bold gallantry of a certain fashionable PEER; who declared she was the most charming woman his eyes ever beheld, that she dressed herself the ensuing evening with studied elegance, and went to a *ball*, where she knew he would be, on purpose to shew her resentment to him by her silence.

MISS MARGARET lives with her favourite niece. She is as happy as her temper will permit; and endeavours to take all trouble of domestic concerns from the care of Rosina. She scolds the servants, who, indeed, don't much mind her, and
adjusts

adjusts the *etiquette* of the table; she is more attached than ever to her niece, and thinks no one in the world her equal.

MALFORD treats Miss Margaret with great attention; he really loves her for her affection to his wife; and never teases her, except now and then about an old beau in the neighbourhood, who divides his time between a romance and a hair-dresser, and, with the gallantry of the French, pays indiscriminate attention to the young and old of the fair sex.

SEDELEY's father purchased the advowson of a church within ten miles of Lansdowne; and the old incumbent dying soon after, the young Curate was promoted to the benefice. The parsonage is surrounded by a large portion of rich glebe land,

land, adorned by nature with beautiful tufts of trees, and improved, from year to year, by a stile of cultivation which evinces that its present possessor has no mistaken notion of the beauties of Arcadia. In this calm retreat Sedgeley and his Eliza pass their days in the sweet enjoyment of mutual love. The pomps and vanities of the world have no charms to disturb their repose. Content in the possession of each other, they have all they can desire; and their days glide happily along in uninterrupted felicity. Once, indeed, the young Curate was betrayed into a condemnation of Eliza's taste, on her pointing out a defect in a poem of his own composing, which he was reading to her; but perceiving that his peevishness had occasioned a tear to fall upon her cheek, he eagerly kissed it away,

away, and imploring her pardon, acknowledged, with submission, the superiority of her judgment.

THE elder Mrs. Manning divides her time between her son and her daughter, and is equally happy with both.

THESE couples pay frequent visits to the Vicar; and there are two months in the year when they all assemble and hold an anniversary at his house, which has been enlarged for the purpose of entertaining them. These meetings exhibit a sublime and pleasing picture of the delightful rewards of virtue, the extacies of parental fondness, the transports of mutual love, and the bliss of friendship; but to do justice to it one must be a spectator of the happy scene. The last time
I had

I had the pleasure of visiting at the vicarage was in summer, and during one of those annual jubilees. I found the family in the garden, seated in the recess which has before been mentioned. The Vicar leaned against the stump of a tree, on which the initials of his wife's name are carved. A girl, with the face of a cherub, sat in his lap; and his hand rested on the head of a little curled-pated urchin who smiled at his knee. Two or three prattling little beings were playing about the walks, and running after butterflies.

The Vicar appeared to be engaged in an interesting discourse; and I caught the last sentence of it as I approached the recess.

"Still,"

"Still, my children, for in that light
 "I regard you all," said he, "still con-
 "tinue to temper the warm impulses of
 "prosperity by the sedateness of reason
 "and reflection. Let a refined and TRUE
 "MORALITY pervade your minds; while
 "its great bulwark, THE CHRISTIAN RE-
 "LIGION! occupies your hearts. So shall
 "you insure the continuation of your
 "happiness, or be prepared to meet those
 "vicissitudes of fortune which no human
 "penetration can foresee, or prudence
 "prevent, with calm constancy, and
 "pious resignation."

Just as I had reached the recess Miss
 Margaret, attended by a servant carrying
 a large cake, overtook me. She intro-
 duced it to her visitors with very high
 encomiums on its goodness; and as an in-
 controvertible

controvertible proof of it, she assured them it was made by the receipt they had so frequently heard her mention, which had descended to her from her great-aunt Mrs. Frankley. It was accordingly tried. Experience confirmed what had been promised in its favour; and fame, by establishing its reputation, contributed to destroy, in a very short time, the very existence of Miss Margaret's cake.

THE finest conceptions that ever blessed the "painter's pencil or the poet's pen," could not exceed the beauty of the present scene. The glorious sun, in the brightest effulgence, was approaching towards the horizon, while the gentle breezes of the evening stole amidst its rays, and tempered the air with refreshing coolness. The rich gifts of Pomona
hung

hung in great abundance upon every tree. The variegated carpet of her sister Flora enamelled the ground. On one side of the meadow, beyond the garden, a group of joyful labourers, resting from their daily toils, sat beneath the friendly shade of an overspreading beech-tree.—On the other side was discovered the old cottager, now grown very infirm, enjoying the evening of his day, under the shelter of his favourite hawthorn: his grandson was playing on a fiddle by his side; not so much for the amusement of the company, as to please a young lass among the groupe of labourers whose rustic charms had touched his heart. The Vicar told us it would certainly be a match, and that he meant shortly to try what he could do for them to promote their happiness.

THE cheerful notes of the fiddle soon tempted some of the party to keep time to them on a level spot of ground in the garden; and the Vicar continued to enjoy the felicity which surrounded him rather beyond his usual hour of sitting up; but, on perceiving it was late, he stole off, with Maria's little boy, to rest. I followed him; and having performed my embassy, which was to desire that he would the next Sunday publish the banns of marriage between a young couple, I took my leave.

AND now, bidding the Vicar, his children, and their friends, once more adieu, we shall desire our readers to do the same, trusting that we have, by the attributes of virtue, rendered their fortresses of happiness impregnable to the storms of fortune.

WEL-

WELFORD a few years ago met a young widow at Bristol Hot-Wells, who was there for the re-establishment of her health, which had been considerably injured by the violence of her grief for the death of her husband, for whom she was yet in weeds. Like a soldier of humanity, he employed the soft artillery of love to comfort the afflicted fair; and, being sensibly touched by the lustre of her eyes, which her tears had not in the least diminished, his endeavours were crowned with such success, that he soon drove from her bosom its assailer sorrow, entered the citadel himself, and demanded capitulation of her heart. The lady wisely considering that her beauty would not, like the walls of Troy, endure a ten years' siege, nor her youth, like the Princess Hippias, continue for a century, surrendered at discre-

tion, and once more enlisted under the banners of the saffron-robed Deity. She possessed a small landed estate, and some ready money in the funds; by the judicious employment of which, together with the interest she raised among the friends of her former husband, she has contrived to procure for Welford the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

MELINDA CLIFFORD lived but three years after the relation of her story to the Vicar's girls. With religious hope, pious resignation, and calm content, she quitted this world for one where alone her soul could experience the return of peace. She was borne to the place of interment by six young women; and the Vicar, as he performed the last office over her remains, shed upon her grave tears

of heart-felt pity and regret. The drooping branches of the same myrtle which grows over the grave of Mrs. Giffey, casts its melancholy shade upon Melinda's — Let the cruel, profligate, and thoughtless spoilers of virgin innocence, as they pass this sacred spot, pause for a moment, and, reflecting on the unhappy doom of Melinda, think of the punishment that awaits their misdeeds. Let them seriously resolve to reform their conduct, and, while the painful sigh of compunction breaks from their lips, on recollecting the unfortunate objects whose happiness they have destroyed, ask their hearts, whether, if real pleasure be their aim, unsullied purity is not the surest means of obtaining it. Happy is the man who, from the fair dawn of youth to the setting evening of his life, can
look

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look back upon his conduct without remorse; to whose mind conscience can hold up the clear mirror of reflection without exciting an uneasy emotion.

BUT I have done. I have endeavoured throughout my humble narrative to inculcate the moral contained in the following beautiful lines of Otway;

- "Then—TO BE GOOD IS TO BE HAPPY! Angels
- "Are happier than mankind, because they are better.
- "Guilt is the source of sorrow; 'tis the fiend,
- "Th' avenging fiend, that follows us behind
- "With whips and stings. The bliss know none of
- "this,
- "But restrain everlasting peace of mind,
- "And find the height of all their heaven is Good—

FAIR PENITENT, Act 3, Scene 1.

I SHALL now, therefore, bid my Readers adieu; premising that, although I
entered.

entered the field a volunteer, I consider them as an awful court-martial, on whose sentence my hopes wait with trembling expectation. Their condemnation will banish me for ever from the profession; but their acquittal will, perhaps, encourage me to seek the road of glory. I hope (let me not find it a forlorn hope) that CANDOUR will award a favourable decision; that cruel CRITICISM will not totally dishearten a young adventurer; and that, though Fame may withhold her laurel, Good-nature will interpose its shield, and protect my production.

F I N I S.

entered the field a volunteer. I considered
 them as an useful court-martial, on whose
 sentence my hopes wait with trembling
 expectation. Their condemnation will
 furnish me forever from the protection;
 but their acquittal will, perhaps, encour-
 age me to seek the soil of glory. I
 hope (but I do not expect) that
 that Court-martial will not
 decide; but I will not
 rely on their favour and
 that, although I may may withhold
 myself, Good-nature will instruct in
 shield, and protect my reputation.

